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ABSTRACT

An historical journal compiled by advanced placement American history students contains 10 articles covering the cultural, economic, and political history of Amityville, New York, from the turn of the century through the Great Depression. Based upon primary source materials including written documents and oral interviews, many of the articles focus specifically on the impact of the Depression on the city: the black community in the 1930's; and education, politics, and business during the Great Depression. Additional articles recount the role of organized religion in the city's history, the development of the public library and the fire and police departments, and the history of the black community. Photographs and document reproductions are included. (LP)

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The Journal of Historical Inquiry *Volume IV*

ED245950

Amityville: The First Half Of The Twentieth Century

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Presented by

The Advanced Placement Class in American History

Amityville Memorial High School

1983 - 1984

Amityville

The First Half Of The Twentieth Century

A NOTE FROM INSTRUCTOR

This is the fourth issue of the Journal of Historical Inquiry. The theme for this year's publication is a local history of Amityville during the first half of the present century. Unlike previous editions, this journal issue is based upon primary source research. Significantly, it marks a tremendous achievement on the part of Amityville's Advanced Placement history students. They have done a magnificant job in researching, writing, and editing their own history journal. What is so remarkable is the demonstrated initiative in searching out and recreating the past based upon primary sources such as written documents and oral interviews. Their contribution to the field of local history is impressive.

In the current issue one will find some very interesting stories about black and white families during the Great Depression, the economic impact of the depression upon local merchants, the role of churches, the expansion of the police and fire departments, the importance of politics during the 1920s and 1930s, the development of the public library, and the growth of the public school system. Hopefully, the reader will gain a greater appreciation for the historical "roots" of the Amityville community.

Volume IV is dedicated to Mr. Rolland Beardsley, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Mr. Ralph Forman, History Department Chairman. Without their support, encouragement, and assistance publication of the journal would have been an impossibility. Students and instructor are deeply indebted to the above individuals for placing scholarship and learning above personal gain. Thanks also to Mrs. Celeste Debono for graciously typing this journal.

Charles F. Howlett, Ph.D.

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AMITYVILLE DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION: "FAMILIES"
Maria Panek

INTRODUCTION

October 24, 1929 marked the beginning of more than a decade of poverty and torment for virtually everyone in the United States. From the Stock Market crash until the United States' entry into World War II, Americans suffered through the Great Depression.

The Depression drastically changed many lifestyles. Former businessmen could now be found selling apples or shining shoes. People were happy to be arrested because it meant a night in jail with a warm bed and some food. "In 1932 more than three times as many persons left this country than entered it. No longer was America the Promised Land." 1 Rents could not be paid, and as a result, thousands of people were evicted from their homes yearly.

Family life during the Depression also changed tremendously. Many men who were formerly heads of the households, and the "bread-winners," were now at home, having lost jobs and feeling very useless and ashamed. Women, and even small children, were now working in factories, sweatshops, or wherever they could find jobs. People resorted to killing both themselves and their children rather than starving to death.

The Great Depression was indeed a tragic event in American history. But how did it affect the small village of Amityville on Long Island, New York? This paper will try to answer that question through personal interviews with those families who remember that historic event.

> "In the 1930's, Long Island suffered the miseries of the nation-wide depression, with all the dislocations of unemployment and relief. Prices hit bottom. You could buy a pretty little house for $5,000 and buy a three course lunch for thirty-five cents." (2)

Recent interviews have indicated that the little town of Amityville, on the border of Nassau and Suffolk counties, seemed to have survived the Depression without as much difficulty as the United States went through as a nation. Families helped each other and were sympathetic to each other's situations. Perhaps this is why Amityville is nicknamed "The Friendly Village."

Mr. and Mrs. Homer Ball came to Amityville in 1929, the first year of the Depression. He was the Physical Education Director at Amityville High School and coached many different teams - track, basketball, baseball and football. During the Depression, he made an outstanding $3,000 a year, but eventually took a 20% cut in pay. According to Mrs. Ball, "You didn't mind it (the cut) because you knew it was necessary and you were very fortunate to have money coming in." (3)

Mrs. Ball made a weekly visit to the bank in the village on Fridays to get ten dollars in order to do the weekly food shopping for her husband and two boys. When asked what her most vivid memory of the Depression was, she quickly replied, "When the bank closed. Suddenly you woke up one day and all the banks were closed and you couldn't get any of your money." (4) The banks were all closed for one day, and that happened to be a Friday. That week Mrs. Ball went to the bank on Thursday for her weekly food money and felt "relieved" when she realized that she had gotten her ten dollars in time.

Mr. Ball was very close to all of his athletes at the High School. During the Depression, the school supplied the football uniforms, but not the shoes. They were in the school, but the boys had to pay for them. One boy was a very good player, but couldn't afford the shoes because his father didn't have a job. One day, there was a shoe salesman in his office, and Mr. Ball asked the boy to give these shoes "just as hard work as you can and tell me if they're worth it." (5) This boy turned out to be not only captain of both the High School team and his Ivy League college team, but also a pro-football player. All thanks to Mr. Ball and his shoes!

According to Mrs. Ball, Amityville fared well during the national crisis. "There was good spirit in the town... Everyone was in the same condition... People didn't go around weeping, I think Amityville did very well during the Depression." (6)

Mr. Donald Muncy was a businessman in every sense of the word, even during the Depression. In 1920, at the age of 19, he moved to Amityville, married, and opened a garage for which he paid twenty-five dollars a month in rent. By the Depression, he also had his own excavating business and four children to raise.

In 1930 he built a house with twelve rooms and two and one half baths on Avon Place where he kept swings, a badminton court, and other things for his children and their friends. "It was nothing to see a dozen children around our house." (7) He also hired a sleep-in maid for thirty dollars a month. A pretty nice extravagance for a family during a nation-wide Depression!

There were many parties during the Depression, but according to Mr. Muncy, "They never put as much spread on the table as they do nowadays.... It was terrible... A lot of people didn't even have money to buy a half a pound of meat." (8)

Mr. Muncy was a prominent citizen of Amityville. He was a member of the Fire Department for 43 years, a one time captain of the Dauntless Hose and Engine Company, and a former President of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1938 he was elected Republican Party committeeman and was town Supervisor for 12 years.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Haverty went on their honeymoon in 1932 and came back to find that his salary had been cut in half. "We started out together with a low salary, so it didn't seem to hit us as badly because we weren't used to a higher salary." (9) They lived in Amityville and he commuted to Manhattan. Before 1930, Mr. Haverty had been a salesman for the

telephone company, but was transferred to the Yellow Pages advertising department for one year because of the Depression. "Everyone figured it would be over in a year." (10) He ended up staying there for 35 years before retiring.

The Depression didn't affect Mr. and Mrs. Haverty and their children too drastically. However, Mrs. Haverty does recall how badly it affected a few families of Amityville from when she helped Saint Martin's deliver food to the needy families.

According to Mr. Haverty, "During the Depression days, the families got closer together. There was a closer home life because people didn't have the money to go out."

Mr. and Mrs. Ruggles had been married for two years when he immediately lost his job because the Depression hit. A yacht designer was such an extravagant profession that he knew no one would need one during the Depression. After losing his job, Mr. Ruggles took any type of work that came along. Once, he delivered a speedboat from Amityville to New Jersey for 25 dollars.

When asked about the morale of the town during the Depression, Mrs. Ruggles replied: "Everyone was in the same boat. Nobody was embarrassed that they didn't have any money because no one else had any either." (12)

Mrs. Ruggles supplied even more evidence that Amityville residents helped each other out during the national crises. "I can remember one woman in the village, she was such a good hearted woman, and she used to make big kettles of soup and she'd take it around to people she knew needed help. She was very kind. And there were many people like that." (13) Mrs. Ruggles herself also helped the needy of Amityville. She and another woman, one day a week, would stand at the triangle in the village and hand out bags of flour sent by the government so that people could make bread.

The bad financial times didn't stop Mrs. Ruggles from having a good time. She still wanted to have a New Year's Eve party, so she asked people to bring their own refreshments and everyone swapped. "We had to make our own fun." (14)

In 1930, when Mr. William Koepchen told his wife Elenore that his job was switched from a bank in Manhattan to one in Amityville, she replied: "'No way. I'm not going out there to be a clam digger or a farmer!'... I didn't approve in the beginning, but you couldn't get me out of here!" (15) she replies now, fifty-four years later.

Mrs. Koepchen was part of a committee of women who belonged to St. Paul's Lutheran church that had to raise money to pay the pastor's salary during the Depression. To do so, the women cooked dinners in a kitchen in the basement of the church and passed them out to the people sitting out in the "dining area." These people would pay seventy-five cents for turkey dinners and fifty cents for pot roast and ham dinners. "We would have a hundred at a setting and there would be even more upstairs in the church waiting their turn." (16) After the turkey dinners, the women would make turkey soup to give to the needy families of the village.

Another fund raiser for the church that Mrs. Koepchen was involved in was called the "Apple Pie Day." A number of women would get together to make apple pies to sell and deliver. One group would wash the apples, another would peel them, another would core them, and finally, a group would cut them. One day they were in the church doing this and they made ninety-six pies. They went upstairs to start to deliver them and saw that there had been a hurricane. "Even nature attacked us during those grim years, as the worst hurricane in over a century struck Long Island on September 21, 1938..." (17)

These women worked very hard during the Depression in order to have a pastor for their church. Mrs. Koepchen was determined at whatever she did: "I don't think you ever get anything without putting some effort into it... The main thing is that you see the funny side of things. That carries you through a lot in life. A whole lot." (18)

Many things were learned about Amityville during the Great Depression by interviewing these families. When asked what their most vivid memory was about the village at that time, the majority answered with a memory which showed that many people in the village could not meet their basic needs without some kind of help. This can be concluded from the fact that many people didn't have enough money for meat, that there was a food delivery program based at St. Martin's church, and that there existed a meal program at the Lutheran church which cost a mere fifty cents per dinner.

While banks all over the nation, and even on Long Island were closing, never to open again, the Bank of Amityville, as learned through these interviews, only closed for one day.

> Banks were failing everywhere, closing their doors with the people's money locked inside. Here, too, depositors rushed to the teller's windows to draw out their savings before it was too late. Our bankers quickly met in stormy all-night sessions to think up some way of saving the hundred banks of Nassau and Suffolk. Funds were raised to salvage two that were tottering. Two others did fail, but we were spared general loss and panic. (19)

Another prominent factor about Amityville during that time was the friendliness. Everyone interviewed commented in some way about how friendly and helpful the people of the village were during the national crisis. People helped each other endlessly and it seemed like a big family. Perhaps that was how a small village like Amityville seemed to survive much better through those years than a big city like Manhattan. People were more cooperative and sympathetic in Amityville because practically everyone knew each other.

One surprising reaction was revealed during these interviews. Three out of five families questioned confused the depression with rationing during World War II. Of course, age may be a factor because their memories of a time fifty years ago may be dim. However, it could also mean that much of Amityville had a harder time during the war when one could only use a certain amount of meat, butter, and even gasoline. As Mrs. Homer Ball states, "You remember the wartime better because of the rationing. That was the hard time." (20)

In order to get through the difficult times of the Great Depression, one needed to be determined and persistant. Of all the persons interviewed, Mrs. Koepchen best captured the philosophy people needed to survive: "I don't think you ever get anything without putting some effort into it... The main thing is that you see the funny side of things. That carries you through a lot in life. A whole lot." (21)

ENDNOTES

1. Ellis, Edward Robb, A Nation in Torment - The Great Depression 1929-1939; Coward-McCann, N.Y. 1970 p. 231

2. Marshall, Bernice, The Rest of the Story 1929-1961; Ira J. Friedman, Inc. N.Y. 1963 101

3. Interview with Mrs. Homer Ball: January 22, 1984

4. Ibid

5. Ibid

6. Ibid

7. Interview with Mr. Donald Muncy: January --- 1984

8. Ibid

9. Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Haverty: January 27, 1984

10. Ibid

11. Ibid

12. Interview with Mrs. Cecil Ruggles: January 29, 1984

13. Ibid

14. Ibid

15. Interview with Mrs. William Koepchen: January 30, 1984

16. Ibid

17. Marshall, The Rest of the Story page 2

18. Interview with Mrs. William Koepchen

19. Marshall, The Rest of the Story page 2

20. Interview with Mrs. Homer Ball

21. Interview with Mrs. William Koepchen

The History of the Black Community in Amityville During The Great Depression

Michelle Annett Carey

Many people comment that the most precious commodities to possess are friends. When one looks at the Black community in Amityville during the Great Depression he will see that this belief holds true. Unlike in other parts of the country, Amityville residents were able to survive the Great Depression without much damage. The people dug in and worked hard to survive, and unsurprisingly, they did. The people, with wisdom acquired through the years, grew and raised all the food they needed. They didn't need a lot of clothes like we do today, but the clothes they required were creatively manufactured with the available cloth. Priorities were taken into consideration and when the money could not stretch to provide all that was desired, they did without. However, most importantly as was mentioned, people always had friends they could depend upon when times got too difficult to handle alone. It is interesting to discover that today, with a population of over 13,000 in North Amityville, people have trouble finding assistance from friends. However, in the 1930's, when the Black community was very small, people had no trouble finding friends they could depend on. The bond between the residents had been born long before the Great Depression. There weren't many Black families in Amityville during the Depression, however; the existing families were very close. This closeness came from the fact that these families developed from the Indian tribes in Amityville. These tribal members eventually took spouses from outside the tribe and settled in the Amityville area.

One such couple is Mr. and Mrs. Philip Fowler. Mr. Fowler is a lifelong resident of Amityville and a Mohawk Indian. He married Mrs. Audrey Fowler and they settled in Amityville. The Fowlers lived through the Great Depression and even raised children during this time. While doing research, some history on the Fowler family was discovered. In the section of Amityville Village between Dixon Avenue and Sprague Place much of the land was owned by the Fowler family. This section was populated by Africans, whose status was changed to native, Negroes, or Niggers and Colored. (1) Mrs. Fowler reminisced about her life in Amityville during the Great Depression. She lived on Bambury Court, where nearly all the Black families resided. The Fowlers built the first house on this road, room by room. The Fowlers raised children during the Depression, including a daughter, Mrs. Beverly Fowler Latimore, who was born during the Great Depression. They couldn't raise their daughter on the food that was fed to wealthy children because of financial reasons, thus, Mrs. Fowler fed her daughter cornmeal mush and her daughter was very healthy. The Fowler children attended the Park Avenue school in Amityville Village. It is interesting to note how Black children began attending the Park Avenue school. On the spot on Albany Avenue off Sunrise Highway, which is now occupied by a barber shop, there was a shanty which was used as a school for the Blacks. The inadequacy of this school prompted George Fowler, who was considered the militant Indian of the time, to demand that the children be sent into the Amityville schools. (2) Eventually, after strong protest, the Village fathers decided to admit all Black children.

When Mrs. Fowler came to Amityville, after her marriage, she had no heat because of the Depression. The Fowlers then acquired coal stoves. They were issued coke, to put in the stoves. It would last twelve hours. They also used wood, which was plentiful. The Fowlers eventually built their own furnace. The Fowlers worked together to survive the hard times brought about by the Depression. Mr. Fowler worked for the Public Works Administration (on the highways) and he earned twelve dollars a week. Mrs. Fowler budgeted the money her husband earned. To lower their food expenses she planted a garden and raised chickens. She issued out what she raised to people who were less fortunate than herself. Mrs. Fowler said, "We had to help each other, or else we wouldn't survive." She also saved money by sewing the family's clothes. She made the overcoats, pants, and other clothing needed by the family. She remembers an English brand of white cloth shirt which she received from rich white people. She made shirts for her daughters from this material.

Mrs. Fowler also found time to do volunteer work in the Village. She remembers going to the Benjamin Banneker Community House on Sunrise Highway. She recalls having Scout meetings, parties, and folk dancing there. She says, "It was built to encourage the young people." Mrs. Fowler's memory is quite good. There was a Benjamin Banneker Community House on property donated by Mrs. Martha Greene Coster as a gathering place where young people could have supervised activities. (3) The presentation of the deed to the property took place at the Bethel A.M.E. Church, in Amityville on August 14, 1940. The ground was broken by Mrs. Coster on August 25, 1940. The name Benjamin Banneker was chosen in memory of "the Negro most referred to as a proof of the intellectual capacity of his people." (4) Banneker (1831-1896) is credited with constructing the first clock made of wood in America, which is said to have run twenty years without stopping. (5)

The Fowler family was also involved in the American Legion. The American Legion provides for any group of men who served in the armed services in this country or abroad. (6) In order to establish a post, a charter must be secured. Thomas Greene Sr., The Hunter, and Squires families, along with several other families applied for a charter. The charter came back with the number 1218. The names of three brave soldiers were adopted by the North Amityville Post. They were Arthur Hunter, Arthur Squires and Frederick Howard Jackson. (7) Thus, the name Hunter, Squires Jackson - American Legion Post No. 1218 was adoptes. In 1938 the wives and other relatives decided to organize an Auxiliary. As the minutes indicate, there were many activities such as visiting the sick, taking gifts to patients, and making badges for the Red Cross. (8)

Mrs. Fowler can't recall too much racial tension. Her husband had lived in Amityville all his life so it didn't affect her. However, she notes that newcomers had to go through a probationary period, before they were accepted. Most people were accepted in Amityville and everyone seemed to love the area. During the Great Depression money was scarce and it would seem that the happy times of the holiday would falter. Mrs. Fowler refuted this. For the Christmas holidays the family went into the woods to get a tree. Round cotton and acorns were used for decorations. Popcorn was strung across the tree and candles were used to light it. Mrs. Fowler still sings the vurtues of Amityville in the 1930's. "Today it's not like

like it used to be," she also sadly notes. With the materialistic attitudes of today it's only fitting that she thinks so.*

Not everyone has lost hope in Amityville. Mrs. Virginia Jackson is an influential member of the Black Community in Amityville. Stored in her home are many of the materials to be used in the Black History Museum, which is to be situated in the North Amityville area. Mrs. Jackson was a young married woman between 1930 and 1934 in Amityville. While the Depression years represented hard times for most people, they weren't too bad for Mrs. Jackson. Mr. Jackson was college trained; he worked a linotype machine in New York City. The Jacksons didn't have a difficult time because Mr. Jackson was college trained and he worked in the city. Luckily, he didn't have to find work in Amityville because work here was scarce.

During the Depression years there wasn't any industry in Amityville. Most of the people who worked in Amityville were either farmworkers or domestics. While agriculture could be found throughout the Village, the largest farms were located in North Amityville along Albany Avenue and North Broadway. (9) Mrs. Jackson remembers the Von-Nessen family who had a farm. (see picture) During the 1930's, many Blacks worked on this farm, most likely due to the depression and the lack of jobs. Mrs. Jackson is wise to remember the Von-Nessens. The trend toward development began with Herman and Henry Von-Nessen who leased from a family known as John and George Purdy for ten years. (10) All the territory (aproximately 3.4 miles) from Bayview Avenue to Schelegal Blvd. was used for the purpose of farming. The Von-Nessens prospered and employed hundreds of laborers, mostly Blacks. In the 1940's, the Von-Nessens bought acreage.

Henry Von-Nessen* operated Maple Lawn, a truck farm on the east side of North Amityville just north of Harrison Avenue. (11) Vegetables were sold from a roadside stand and shipped to city markets along with the produce of his brother's farm on Albany Avenue. Mr. Von-Nessen's horses and wagons were a familiar sight on Village streets in the spring of each year as he plowed the soil in many village backyards for family gardens. (12) In the late summer, the wagon piled high with fresh mown hay cut from numerous open fields in the Village could be seen returning to the farm. (see picture) The increased use of the automobile brought changes to the operation of the Von-Nessen farm. After World War II it succumbed to the bulldozer's destruction and passed quickly from the Amityville scene. (13) Other farms located along north Albany Avenue met with a similar fate over the years.

Mrs. Jackson remembers that there was one Black church, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which the majority of Blacks attended. She is correct; in fact Bethel A.M.E. Church is the oldest church on Long Island,

* Taken from an interview with Mrs. Audrey Fowler January 19, 1984

* In Backward Glance, the name is written Von-Essen. However, evidence points to the fact that both books are discussing the same person. Thus, the name Von-Nessen will continue to be used.

founded in 1815. (see picture) However, other Black churches existed in Amityville during the Great Depression. Holy Trinity Baptist Church was dedicated on Sunday, October 9, 1927. Under the leadership of Reverend W. P. Alston, the church building was erected and the cornerstone was laid during 1929, the first year of the depression. On April 13, 1936, under the leadership of Reverend A. A. Wood, the Holy Trinity Baptist Church Building Fund Committee opened its first bank account with the First National Bank and Trust Company of Amityville. (14) After 1941, numerous renovations were done and membership grew enormously. Money was becoming available as America began climbing out of the hole dug by the Depression. On August 3, 1941, Hollywood Baptist Church was founded by the late Rev. Frank P. Rogers Sr. Again, we see America's economy moving again.

Basically, Mrs. Jackson remembers that the people who lived in Amityville during the 1930's were very friendly. However, she said she remembers in 1931, the KKK paraded down Merrick Road. They stopped cars, but they didn't molest people. They just wanted to intimidate people. No information was discovered to substantiate this statement. However, in David M. Chalmers Hooded Americanism it states that the Klan marched down Merrick Road in 1925. Thus, we may presume that if the KKK marched down Merrick Road in 1925 they might have marched in 1931. Mrs. Jackson made it clear that this was only one incidence and that overall the people in Amityville got along quite well and everyone enjoyed living here.*

Mrs. Eunice Leftenant is now 93 years old. She left Goose Creek, South Carolina nearly 61 years ago - not because of the boll weevil who destroyed crops, or the frequent encounters with black snakes, rattlesnakes, foxes, alligators, bigots, or any of the other burdens of life.(15) She didn't leave because merchants dyed hominy grits dark brown and sold them as coffee. (16) It was a dream for her six kids that brought Eunice Leftenant to Long Island three months before her husband.

In Goose Creek, South Carolina Mrs. Leftenant's children couldn't get any thing better than three months of school in a one-room church. Mrs. Leftenant realized the importance of an education. "People said I was crazy for even wanting it," she said "so that's why I left." In 1923 Eunice Leftenant arrived in Amityville and settled on Washington Avenue in a tiny five room house with a chicken coop in back. Her husband James gradually built the house room by room to accommodate all the Leftenant children.

Mrs. Leftenant discussed the racial discrimination in Amityville compared to the racial discrimination she left in South Carolina. She said, "I'll tell you this. There is a little rotten corn in every man's barn, but I never studied in that. I left it alone." (17) Mrs. Leftenant also responded on the work ethic now as compared to when she was raising a family. She said, "I think most people would rather starve. Work and build, people think you can't do that nowadays." (18)

Said County Legislator Lou Howard (R-Amityville), "Eunice Leftenant is the elder statesman of Amityville, bar none." They are an institution in

* Taken from an interview with Mrs. Virginia Jackson on December 1, 1983.

Herman Von Nessen, born March 26, 1888 and his wife, who was born on May 10, 1893.

Mrs. Else Von Essen
May 10, 1893

the area and, I believe, one of Long Island's most remarkable families. Says Amityville Mayor Victor Niemi, "I grew up with Leftenants; families like this don't come along too often." To honor her family's contribution to the nation, Suffolk authorities recently presented her with a distinguished service award.

Much of her conversation concerns the virtues of hard work. It has been her way of life, and she hopes she has passed it, "like a gift of blood," into the next generation. Of Eunice's thirteen children, seven served in the armed forces. Her daughter, Nancy Colon, was the first black woman to be commissioned in the newly desegregated Army Nurse Corps in 1947. She is now a nurse in Amityville High School. Mrs. Colon agreed to talk to me about her life during the Depression. While her life during the Depression was difficult, one point she specifically brought across was that overall she had a very contented childhood.

Mrs. Colon was a kid during the Great Depression. Her family was large; there were nine kids in the family. Her father had a big garden in the yard and the family raised pigs and chickens. Every morning before school it was the children's responsibility to work in the garden because after all, that was how they were fed. Because food could not be grown or raised in the winter, the family canned vegetables and fruits and cured ham, bacon, and hogshead cheese, so that the family could survive the winter.

There wasn't much money coming into the family. Mrs. Leftenant worked in South Bay at Holiday House, a home for youngsters sponsored by the Fresh Air Fund. When the camp closed during the school year, Mrs. Leftenant was able to buy the open barrels of corn meal, rice, and oatmeal for the winter. Thus, her only food expense was fresh fruit. Mrs. Colon's oldest brother worked in a CC camp in Yaphank. Her father worked whatever odd jobs he could find. At one point her father established a garbage route using a push cart. While on his route he noticed fruit trees and he asked the owners' permission to pick the fruit off the ground. They usually agreed and the family picked quints, pears and apples. After picking the fruit many more tasks lay ahead. They utilized every part of the fruit. For example, with the apple the solid part was canned and used in pies, the soft part of the apple was used to make applesauce, and jelly was made from the skin and core. Utilization of land and resources brought many people through the Great Depression.

Mrs. Colon remembers that the kids were never permitted to dwell on the fact that they were poor. Her mother worked all day and then came home and washed and ironed the children's clothing so that they would look like everyone else. Mrs. Leftenant always said, "as long as she had children she was never tired." However, Mrs. Leftenant expected something in return for all her hard work. No matter what the circumstances, she did not want to hear about her kids not getting along. If a disagreement wasn't resolved by the time she got home, everyone was in trouble. "In this way" Mrs. Colon said, "we learned to get along with others and to give and take."

The Leftenant family attended church every Sunday. They lived under the old system, whereby Sunday was a day of rest; there was no cooking and

no play clothes were worn. Mrs. Colon remembers that on Sunday afternoons there were baseball games. The field was located where present day Burlington Factory is situated. Sunday evenings were filled with youth group meetings at the church. During the lean days, Christmas was a family time. The family went out into the woods and cut down a Christmas tree. They strung cranberrys and popcorn for decorations. The children's Christmas presents were plates with an apple, an orange, hard candy, and nuts. The family was basically a contented one. "Oh, I remember Saturday afternoons of all day crabbing in the South Bay which was followed by a crab feast for dinner," said Mrs. Colon; indeed it was a Great Depression in Amityville?*

Mr. Charles Bellinger Sr. was a native of South Carolina like Mrs. Leftenant. He was educated at Howard University. Mr. Bellinger Sr. came to Amityville because he thought he'd get a better break in this rural area. He worked for the railroad thus, it was cheap for him to travel from Amityville to his job in the city. Even with a college education Mr. Bellinger Sr. could only get a menial job paying sixty dollars a month. The main reason Mr. Charles Bellinger Sr. came to Amityville was to get his family off the city streets where trouble awaited them. Mr. Charles Bellinger Jr. remembers leaving New York City and arriving in Amityville. He discussed his departure and his subsequent life in Amityville during the Depression. This is what he had to say,

> "I arrived in Amityville about 1934 and compared to Bedford Sty Brooklyn, Amityville was a paradise. I remember seeing breadlines, crowds outside charity houses, piles of furniture set out in the gutter from people being dispossessed and the hopeless look of men in the long lines standing in the bitter cold with cardboard in their shoes.
>
> I could tell a lot more but that is another story. I saw none of this in Amityville. Amityville was a rural community and Truck farming was a major industry. People shared what little they had with one another. I remember baskets of vegatables left on the front porch by someone in the night. Almost everyone had a garden in the yard and raised chickens. Some even had hogs and goats. I once attended a 'Hog Killing Time' and that was enough for me. Those were the times you could go down to the Bay and jump in anywhere for swimming and treading clams. We would bring back bushels of clams and plenty of fish to eat, sell, or give away.
>
> My generation was in Grade, Junior, and Senior High School at the time and we all had to hustle. The coal and oil man starved to death in North Amityville because the forests were full and almost everyone burned wood. The boys always kept the wood bins full. Some of the boys would caddy at the golf courses up in Bethpage on the week-ends and in the summer. We all helped buy our own clothes and helped the family out.
>
> Everyone stayed busy doing something. There were dozens of clubs to belong to. The boys had athletic clubs for baseball and boxing and the Boy Scouts. The girls had social clubs that sewed, helped in the community, and planned house socials

* Taken from an interview with Mrs. Nancy Colon on January 10, 1984

HAYING SEASON ON THE PLOCH FARM
UNION AVENUE, AMITYVILLE

BETHEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
FOUNDED 1815

and dances at the Community House. The men founded the American Legion and their Bugle and Drum Corp kept us busy practicing and playing. Saturday afternoon found practically the whole town at the High School football game because in those days Amityville was always the best. On Sundays the whole of North Amityville would be at the baseball game on Sunrise Highway and Albany where the local ballclub, known as 'Mohawks' would play other teams.

Some of our Fathers commuted to the city to work. Some worked locally for the moving van company or the lumber yard. Some had their own businesses such as refuse collection, gardening, and hauling fresh food along delivery routes. The federal government had a WPA work program that provided funds for civil projects and jobs, but none of the money seemed to get up to North Amityville. The money and jobs would get as far as the Town of Babylon and then run out. My father, Mr. Charles Bellinger Sr., Sam Murphy, Rufus Devine, Tom Greene Sr. and some other 'Leaders' formed a committee and 'kicked in a few doors' in Babylon and then the jobs got to North Amityville. The local men on WPA put in the first sidewalks in North Amityville. Starting at Dixon Avenue, they ran north on Albany Avenue as far as the Bethel A.M.E. Church. They are in good condition today while others that have been put down later have crumbled. The committee was active in Civil Rights such as protests at the school board over the treatment of students and the stereotyped literature taught in the classes, and at the Town of Babylon over the shooting of a colored man in the back by a Town policeman.

Some of the older boys joined the government Civilian Conservation Corp. The Corp would take men and form labor battalions that did conservation work, planted trees, built roads and parks. They were outfitted in WWI army uniforms and received some military training. They were among the first draftees for WWII which came along and ended the Depression.

Maybe the picture I have painted is a little too rosy but somehow you remember the good times. Most of the people of North Amityville were of Indian heritage and had owned their land and homes for generations so that relieved paying rent. Taxes were next to nothing. After years of Depression, the defense industries came along and things started easing up as 'our jobs' were being vacated by those who had taken them during the Depression, which was supposed to be over but was never officially announced."*

The Depression meant a lot of different things to a lot of different people. However, my research on the Black Community in Amityville during the Great Depression painted a picture of people used to struggling to survive and willing to struggle if it meant advancing the future generations. All the people interviewed spoke on the idea of trying to make things better for their children and grandchildren to follow. All the people possessed stubborn prides which prevented them from accepting assistance during the Depression and which gave them strength to survive all the changes

* Taken from an interview with Mr. Charles Bellinger Jr. on January 27, 1984.

which occurred in the subsequential years of Amityville's development. Today most express the fact that they hoped for a little more for Amityville. However, all of them are proud to have been part of the community that through unity and patience survived one of the most difficult times in American history.

Endnotes

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4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. Clerk North Amityville, pg. 27
7. Long Island Sun, March 17, 1939
8. Clerk North Amityville, pg. 27
9. Purdy, Seth Jr. A Backward Glance, "Amityville's Farms" (New York, 1980) pg. 5
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THE CHURCHES OF AMITYVILLE

1900 - 1940

Diane Jacobsen

The church has always been a dominant force in the lives of people, and Amityville is no exception. From the turn of the century there have been five major churches which have grown along with the country: The First Methodist Church, Simpson Methodist Church, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, St. Martin of Tours Church and St. Paul's Lutheran Church. These churches have lasted through the boom period of the 1920's and through the Depression period of the 1930's.

The First Methodist Church, at the turn of the century had just celebrated it's tenth anniversary on July 10, 1902. The church parsonage underwent extensive remodeling and was greatly enlarged into the present home of the minister in 1907. A yearbook, containing valuable information and church history, was complied by the Young Women's Association, which was formed in 1908 to join the already organized Men's Tuesday Night Club, The Young Folks Happy Hour and the Preparatory Society, both of whose purpose was to give definite instruction to the young people of the church.

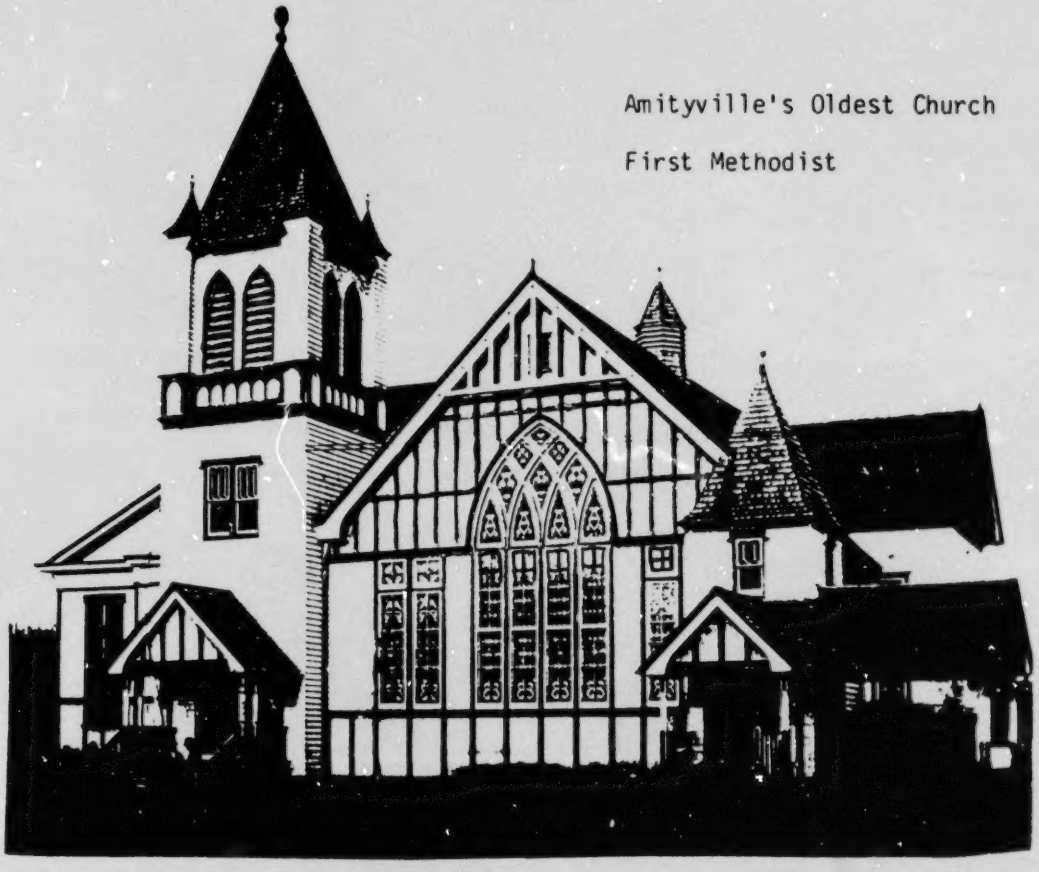
In 1911, the church was completely renovated and memorial windows were placed in the Sunday school to the memory of Jarvic C. Bayliss, James H. Bennett, Uriah Haff, Erastus Ketchum and Thomas Powell, all of whom were longtime church members. In the same year, Boy Scout Troop No. 1 was organized, one year after the organization was first introduced in the country. It was later changed to Troop No. 2 by the county organization since a troop in Babylon had been formed at an earlier date.

In 1915 the addition of "The Annex" was constructed on the north side of the church school room building to accomodate the increasing enrollment of the school. And, in 1921, the choir originally stationed at the southeast corner of the church was moved to the newly constructed choir room and loft adjoining the south side of the church auditorium, and an organ was then installed.

During the Depression, The Men's Club was organized with Mr. Benjamin F. Powell as president. It held dinner meetings with a form of entertainment monthly, except for the hot summer months. The Fellowship Club was also organized with Mr. Oliver S. Warren as president. They had summer meetings and an inspirational hour during the pastorate of Reverand William R. McDermott. In 1939 the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church was changed to the Methodist Church with the unification of American Methodism. In the new church organization, the Ladies Aid Society's objective was to obtain funds for the church and parsonage, to increase the membership and helpfulness, and to cultivate a spirit of fraternity among it's membership and the members of the church and the community. The woman's Foreign Missionary Society, whose purpose was the interest of Christian woman in the evangelization of heathen women and to raise funds for this work, were supplanted by a new organization, The Women's Society for Christian service.

In the same year, major repairs to the church buildings became imperative. A remodeling plan was laid out in front of the church members for acceptance. The plans called for the installation of a second floor, a new floor in the parish hall, and a kitchen and a balcony for the church sanctuary, which was to service three classrooms. The first floor was to be remodeled as a chapel, cloak room and a foyer to extend the full length of the church, with three entrances to the sanctuary. The repairs to the decoration of the sanctuary included an installation of a ceiling. A brick tower was constructed to the north-east corner of the building. The estimated cost of the proposed plan was $25,215.00 Funds were gained over a three year period by pledges, memorial gifts, and cash subscriptions equaling $23,766.50.

The church was then rededicated on October 20, 1940, and the ceremony was held in the newly remodeled church sanctuary.



Amityville's Oldest Church

First Methodist

Simpson Methodist Church, affectionately called the "North Church" by villagers, also has a long history in Amityville. In 1899 the Young People's Society placed a bell in the tower and new stained glass windows were installed as were wooden chairs to replace the old opera seats. The church school was also added in this year. The next ten years were normal and in 1906 the church, suffering growing pains, enlarged the facilities of the

church school and in 1909 the church school room gained a new piano. In 1917, it became necessary to increase the budget and to plead for a better sense of stewardship on the part of the membership. The expenditures for this year were $1,130.00, $750.00 of it went to the minister's salary. The year ended with a report balance of $1.63 in the treasury.

In 1929, the budget was $3,500.00 of which $1,866.00 was for the minister's salary. In June of 1929, the Reverend C.M. Wilson was concerned over usable church area. In a report to the Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal Church he stated, "The village has a population of 3500 scattered over a two or three mile radius... our territory runs about 2 miles north of the village limits. He notes, that about one dozen new bungalows have been erected in this area in the last two years, it may be said that the section is improving and will increase in population." (1) The Reverend had hoped to develop a building plan to increase the church facilities as the population increased, the plan was intended to cover the needs of twenty-five years, but the plans were scrapped because of the demands for a new kitchen enlargement and a heating system installed in the basement. These demands were made by the Ladies Aid Society.

Trouble hit the North Church in 1939 when the church property was taken by the state of New York, for the extension of Sunrise Highway, wiping out 53 years of hard work to improve the church. For the remainder of 1932 and all of 1933 the service's were held in Frank Smith's furniture store on Broadway, next to the old library. A decision was reached to move the building to a 5 acre site, northwest of the original location. The church was awarded $28,000.00 for the condemnation. The church land was then purchased from W.B. Inglee, a member of the church. The basement walls were poured, and because of the slow payment by the government, services were held in the basement for two years. The santuary was then moved to the site and refurnished, and services began again in the church in the late summer of 1935.

The North Church in 1898

Simpson Church's Second Location.

The history of Saint Martin of Tours Church is very sketchy, possibly because everything was running smoothly. There were no major concerns to report except in 1918, when the Reverend James F. Irwin believed it was time to build a school. A fund drive was begun to secure the funds. The Dominican Sisters were invited to conduct classes. Sister Emma became the first principal. She and two assistants conducted classes in the church basement and traveled back and forth to Queen of the Rosary Convent in North Amityville everyday. Ground was broken in 1921 for a building with eight clasrooms and an auditorium, which served as lyceum for village affairs, was constructed directly opposite the church. In 1922 a house was purchased to serve as a convent until 1926, when the present convent was constructed next to the school. In 1923 registration had increased, so then there were five sisters teaching in the school.

Again everything ran smoothly for most of the 1920's until 1930, when the Depression hit. Father Finn and Father Garvey did manage to obtain quantities of surplus food, free from the government. The women of the parish cooked huge meals and offered dinners for ten cents each meal.

Saint Martin of Tours Church

St. Paul's Lutheran Church was first organized in 1930, at the beginning of the Depression period. By the end of the first month of organization there were seven students already enrolled in the school. By the end of the year there were thirty students enrolled. The Ladies Aid Society was formed in November to try to recruit new parishioners. In 1931 a meeting was called to bring about the formal organization of the church. At this meeting, the congregation also accepted, from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dittmann, the parcel of land on Park Avenue on which the church now stands.

Now that the church legally existed and owned land, the next step was to erect the church building itself. The church officials set about obtaining plans for the construction. Ground was broken on August 4, 1931, under the construction of Mr. Chris Haab. On October 4th of the same year, the cornerstone was laid with Reverend Brunn as Pastor. On November 22, 1931, the congregation met to dedicate it's church to the Lord. In January the first issue of "The Messenger", St. Paul's monthly paper, made it's appearance. In 1933 a pipe organ was given to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Ritzheimer in loving memory of their daughter, Minnie Louise. For a church to have such a substantial beginning in the middle of the Depression, the harsh realities of the time could not have affected them that much.

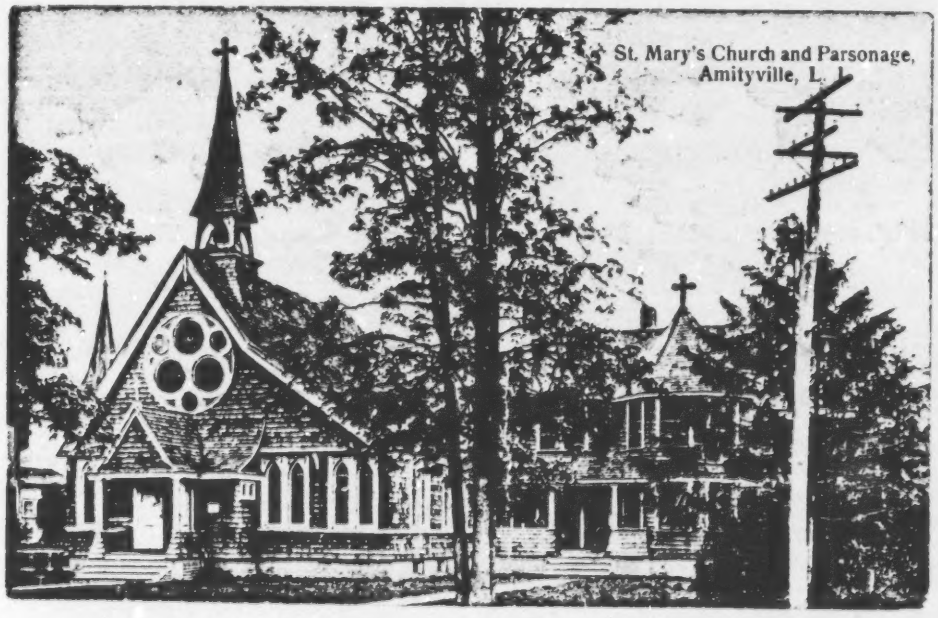
St. Paul's Lutheran Church

St. Mary's Episcopal Church seemed to have the most ample information. Some years remain unrecorded, indicating that during those years everything appeared uneventful. In 1902, a parish house was built on the south side of the church building. The house served as a place for the first grades for Amityville's grammer school in 1904. In 1907 - 1908 the parish house was moved to the rear of the church, the church building was widened to allow for a south aisle, and a rectory was constructed adjoining the church

on the site where the parish house had formerly been located. The Church school was then opened in 1913, with increased attendance, and in a short while, approximately 100 children were enrolled in the school. A memorial tablet was placed in the memory of Mrs. Roger S. Williams, the organist and Sunday School teacher for over 20 years. The tablet was placed in the nave of the church in appreciation of her devoted service. In 1917 Reverend Vedder Van Dyck took charge of St. Mary's in January.

In 1920 the church acquired, for it's own protection, two plots of ground, one to the south fronting 58 feet on Broadway, and one fronting 100 feet on Avon Place. Three-thousand dollars was also spent on the building of a choir room and a guild room under the church. A few years later a similar amount was raised for the enlargement of the parish hall kitchen, the addition of two rooms, and a new ceiling was put on the auditorium and a hardwood floor laid. Extensive plantings were made for the adornments of the church grounds and new roofs were placed on the parish house and church.

After 1929, with the dark days of Depression setting in, other needs for financial support were necessary. This led to the establishment of the "Every Member Canvas." Reverend Bayard H. Goodwin conducted the first every member canvas for St. Mary's in 1929. This helped the church on a business-like basis and encouraged weekly giving as a "constant reminder of God's Bounty here on earth." (2) Reverend Goodwin gathered together some of the women of the church, the officers of the guild, and the Alter guild and formed a Rector's Council which helped meet the financial problems month by month. Mrs. Louise Richards, a devoted church worker, organist, choir master and president of the guild, ran many a church supper and cake



St. Mary's Episcopal Church

sale to meet the emergency of the day. The sacristy was enlarged to it's present size and a washroom was added to the basement of the church. Paintings of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Columba, St. Ann, St. Mary, St. John, St. Elizabeth, St. Augustine and St. Alban were painted by Mr. Day as a series of panels on the reredos, which is the wall behind the alter.

In 1932 the early light fixtures in the church were replaced by a more suitable lighting system. The boiler, which had been working by using several pecks of potatoes to keep the boiler from leaking, gave out. Mr. B.T. Ebbets installed a new furnace and donated his labor to the church, since funds were so low.

In 1935, four devoted women of the parish, Miss Ruth Patterson, Mrs. Alfred W. Stevens, Jr., Mrs. William Stauf and Mrs. George Doherty, gave the chapel of St. Michael and all the Angels. This chapel was placed in the basement under the church in the choir room - originally used for a place of repose of the Sacrement during Naundy Thursday. During the war, when fuel rationing made it impossible to heat the church, the Mass was said there every day.

Basically, throughout the troubled period of the Depression, and earlier in the 1920's, these five churches kept the spirit of charity and God's work in play. In view of the member's involvement in club and church related functions, the people literally kept the church alive. In economic and spiritural aspects, their belief and devotion to the church and God helped bring them through this period. Funds that were badly needed were always gained through clubs, like the Ladies Aid involvement in fund raisers. The morale of the people while doing church work remained high despite the depressing tones of this era. Today these churches still remain a beautiful remembrance of people's love and hard work to keep the spirit alive during such hard times.

ENDNOTES

1. Rev. C.M. Wilson, when reporting on the church area to the Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

2. Reverend Bayard H. Goodwin, talking about church patronage.

3. Basic information on Simpson Methodist Church, Mr. Seth Purdy.

4. Information on St. Martin of Tours Church courtesy of Father Skelly.

5. Information on St. Mary's church courtesy of Father Geminder.

6. Information on St. Paul's courtesy of Rev. Leslie.

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THE HISTORY OF THE BLACK CHURCHES IN AMITYVILLE

Ronnie Sullivan

Although the small farming community of Amityville remained virtually unaffected by the Depression, many changes took place in the black community prior to, during, and following this period in history. Despite the fact that they were few in number, the black churches in Amityville flourished and became the focal point of the black community. By the time of the Depression the church was looked upon as "the place to be." For blacks it was the "hot spot" of society since everyone attended church and all of everyone's free time was spent there. An unnamed source described church services as being better than today, for there was less of an emphasis placed on money. This source also described church services in his day as being more "down-to-earth", since there were less people in the community, which contributed to the quieter, yet more involved services.

The origins of the Black Church in Amityville, however, date back to the time when the President was James Madison, and reconstruction of the devastated nation's capitol, due to the War of 1812, was still underway. It was during this period that Daniel Squires invited three men to his home for the purpose of organizing a place of worship for black residents. A Sunday School had already been in existence and holding regular sessions in residents' homes since 1814.

Beginning in 1815, the members of this new church met in one another's homes to hold Sunday services for over twenty years. In 1839, the congregation was deeded a site on the west side of Albany Avenue, just south of Great Neck Road. This was done by Elias Hunter. In 1844, they received as a gift an old icehouse which, once moved to this site acquired only five years earlier, served as the first place of worship for the congregation. The first pastor was Reverend Benjamin Bates. As an example of his dedication to his congregation, and, in general, the spiritual ferver experienced by the entire black community, Reverend Bates, who was a resident of Jamaica, Queens, would make his weekly "trek" on foot to conduct services in Amityville.

Throughout the remaining years of the nineteenth century the church continued to expand. In 1904, a parsonage for resident pastors and their families was built at Albany Avenue and Smith Street. In 1912, an official cornerstone was laid for an enlarged building. The church was incorporated and became a member of the New York Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Following World War II, farm lands in Amityville were giving way to new home developments, and the facilities of the old church became obsolete due to the arrival of many new residents. Plans were drawn up to once again enlarge the old building. Mrs. James Coster presented the congregation with a new site between Sunrise Highway and Simmons Street in Copiague. A decision was made to build a new church on this land. In 1957, a building fund drive began and as a result, the ground was broken for the new church in 1962. Under the leadership of Reverend John W. Lee, church members were able to worship for the first time on Palm Sunday, 1967, at

their new and present location.

Aside from the Bethel A.M.E. Church, other churches were constructed in the Black community. In 1924, a group of concerned persons decided to band together for the purpose of providing missionary services to those in need. This special group of persons held periodic house to house meetings. In these "missionary" meetings, the members were beginning to express an interest in expanding their community services to include conducting spiritual services. The executive body of the "missionary" held a special meeting to organize such services. As a result of the hard work, dedication, compassion and faith of these nine missionary workers, and due primarily to the grace of God, the Holy Trinity Baptist Church was formed. The Reverend W.P. Alston became the church's initial leader, and Adele Alston served as the first clerk.

The Holy Trinity Baptist Church was incorporated and dedicated on Sunday, October 9, 1927. In 1928, Mrs. Lettie Kyles succeeded Adele Alston as clerk, and served for three years.

Reverend Alston was a spiritual and effective pastor. Under Reverend Alston's leadership, the church building was erected, and the cornerstone of the church was laid in 1924. Charter members of Holy Trinity at this time included Brother Joseph Young, Brother Matthew Kyles, and Sisters Dela Slater, Mattie Cheatham, Lettie Kyles, and E.P. Greene. Brother Joseph Young became the first serving deacon of the Holy Trinity Baptist Church.

Even during the Depression Era the Holy Trinity Baptist Church continued to flourish. In 1932, the dynamic Reverend Alston was replaced by Reverend D. Brown. Reverend Brown's pastorage was short-lived and unfortunately, information regarding his pastorage is unavailable. He was succeeded by the Reverend A.A. Wood. Under Reverend Wood's leadership, following a meeting of the board of directors on April 13, 1936, the Holy Trinity Baptist Church Building Fund Committee opened its first bank account with the First National Bank and Trust Company of Amityville. Brother Matthew Kyles was elected as the Church's first treasurer. The board of directors, however, felt the need for another treasurer so on September 30, 1936, Mr. Major Bracton was appointed to the office of treasurer of the building fund. Also, under Reverend Wood's leadership, the Eastern Baptist Association meeting was held at Holy Trinity. Reverend Wood served as pastor for eight years. The present pastor of Holy Trinity is Reverend Spurgeon Creighton, who took over in 1962.

The number of Black churches continued to increase even after the Depression Era. At this point in time, the black church continued to function as a focal point of the black community in Amityville. More and more blacks continued to seek their Savior through the construction of more Houses of Worship, which often began in such humble surroundings as peoples' homes, and in one case, even a garage.

In 1941, six people saw the need for an additional House of God in the Amityville area. These six people decided to hold their weekly services in the garage of one of its members. It was out of this garage, and out of the determination of these six people, that the church currently known as the Hollywood Baptist Church of Christ evolved. The Hollywood Baptist

Church is presently located at 3504 Great Neck Road in Amityville. It was in 1959 that the young Reverend Doctor Andy C. Lewter, Sr. was called to serve at the Hollywood Baptist Church of Christ. He accepted the church as his new home on June 14, 1959, and is currently still the Pastor of Hollywood. Under Dr. Lewter's direction, numerous achievements have occurred in the progress of the church.

Many of these accomplishments have occurred during the fifteen year span covering the years 1961 - 1976. In 1961 the new edifice was completed and the parsonage was completed in 1963. The membership grew to over 1300 people in 1967, and in 1968 the Hollywood Day Care Center was established. In 1971 a twelve passenger club wagon was purchased to transport the elderly. In 1972, moreover, the church awarded over 22 scholarships to its college students. Two years later, Hollywood conducted a Mortgage Burning Drive, which concluded on September 22, 1974, the church's thirty-third anniversary. The drive proved successful, as in 1976, both the church and the church parsonage had their mortgages burned, years ahead of schedule. Hollywood climaxed this incredible fifteen year period with the purchase of a forty-three passenger bus.

The Hollywood Baptist Church has continued to expand even today. In recent years, two late model vans have been added to the church. Also, a new sound system, including a sound-proof recording room in the balcony of the church, has been added to enhance the quality of the services. Most recently this church has been blessed with an Outreach Television Ministry, which is an hour-long videotaped service shown weekly on television.

All of this began with that initial religious fervor sparked during the Depression Era of American History.

In addition to the above mentioned churches, two more churches were built on the faith of their founders. Thus, in 1944, built on instructions from God in the form of visions as seen by founder Reverend C. Gomez, the Zion Gospel Church was founded. This church is presently located at the corner of forty-fourth Street and Warren Street in North Amityville. Two years later, the St. John the Baptist was founded, and today stands near the Amityville - Copiague border.

Thus, it is evident that in the time of a widespread crisis, people find it necessary to band together under a common goal, which in this case was to seek a closer relationship with God.

THE AMITYVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT: A BACKWARD GLANCE

Matthew De Marco

Dating back to the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Amityville Volunteer Fire Department has cultivated and maintained a rich tradition of service and protection for their community and the surrounding communities. When they were not putting out fires, the Organization served as a social medium through which the firemen could find entertainment and camaraderie. The purpose of this paper is to give a brief history of the Amityville Fire Department as an organization, and to shed some light on how the Great Depression affected the Department. (If indeed at all!)

In the beginning there were a handful of volunteers who wished to join together for mutual protection against destructive, and potentially fatal fires. The Amityville Hook & Ladder Company Number 1 was established in 1886. In 1887 Hook & Ladder Company Number 2 was formed. They used a twelve foot long truck which was designed similarly to Number 1's truck. The members of Hook & Ladder Company Number 2 were between the ages of 10 - 14 years. Despite their young age they were quite active and proved themselves to be a useful addition. When there was a fire, they were sure to be there to help out.

By mid December, 1888, after having combated a number of fires, the most recent of which destroyed the Long Island Home (despite the help of Babylon Fire Department), it was determined by the town officials that a hand engine was to be purchased. The Long Island Home was a psychiatric hospital, located at what is now Sunrise Highway and Route 110. The purchase of the new truck was to safeguard against fires at places such as this. It was also determined that the Junior Hook & Ladder Company would disband, and that the members would form a hose company. A month later (two weeks into the new year) Amityville Hose Company Number 1 was formed. Although its formal date of organization was August of 1892, it had been actively servicing the community. On the day it was formed it consisted of sixteen members, ranging from 15 - 18 years of age. A hose carriage was soon purchased for them. For a number of years things remained uneventful. Each Fire Company was its own department, answered its own calls, and carried on all activities separately from the other companies.

In 1905 there was talk among the fire companies to unite and form one organization so as to increase the efficiency of fire protection. On November 18, 1905, at the meeting of the company warden, the Amityville Fire Department was formally organized. Despite the efforts of the new Amityville Fire Department, less than one month after its organization, the Great South Bay Hotel at the foot of Ocean Avenue was ravaged by an uncontrollable fire. Up until this time, the hotel had been a summertime hot spot for many tourists who fled to the oceanside to cool down.

In 1912 the Amityville Fire Department made history. They became the first Fire Department in Suffolk County to have a motorized fire truck. The truck was a 1910 Johnson. This truck was ordered, then shipped to Amityville via the railroad. When it arrived it was just the chassis - complete with motor, tanks, wheels... the essentials. It had to be taken to a

carpenter who built a body for it. Until this time, the equipment was either pulled by men, or by horses. In 1923 a new Pumper truck was added. At first it was not going to be purchased, but after a fire on Park Avenue in a Hat Box factory (Lindenhurst Fire Department had to be called in) the motion was passed and the truck was purchased. During this same time period a Model T soda bottle chemical truck was added, thus Chemical Company Number 3 was formed. In 1922 Hose Company Number 4 was organized and added to the Amityville Fire Department, and in 1926 the first Fire Chief's car was purchased, a Model T.

At the end of 1929, the Amityville Fire Department was already a well established organization. The "Great Depression" literally destroyed many organizations, companies, and lives. While in some areas there was psychological as well as economic depression, the Amityville Fire Department, I have found, experienced neither. Economically this is quite easy to explain. As mentioned earlier, the Amityville Fire Department is a volunteer organization, therefore cutbacks would not hurt manpower. Also, by the middle of the 1920's the Fire Department had all the equipment it needed. The only way in which the economy affected the organization was in the buying of new hoses, rubber coats, boots and other small accessories. Even so, the men did not go without, they just had to conserve. Psychologically the morale of the members was very good. There were fire tournaments held often in various parts of the state, which the men travelled to and participated in, and often won or placed. The tournaments were competitions between the different fire departments in which they were judged on things such as speed in putting out fires, laying out the hoses, climbing ladders, and many others. This was a great morale booster. So much so, that there were waiting lists for men who wanted to join the organization. This was true not only for the Amityville Fire Department, but for the Fire Departments in surrounding towns as well. In 1931, the Fire Department joined the Babylon Volunteer Firemans Association. The organization was a compilation of all of the Fire Departments in the town of Babylon.

The fiscal year 1932 - 33 saw a marked decrease in the amount of damage caused by fires. In the previous year, the damage amounted to $15,025 on a total of 40 alarms answered, while in 1932 - 33 it was only $4,400 total with 36 alarms answered. The year 1930 - 31 was disastrous in comparison to the following two years. The damage amounted to $141,570, with a total of 55 alarms answered. This large sum was in fact due to a fire of suspicious origin at the Wood Lumber Company on Sterling Place. Wood Lumber supplied the wood for many of the developments east of Amityville. Although arson was suspected, no formal charges were pressed.

In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States. In the fire house, as long time fireman Al Wells says, "there was much resentment towards Roosevelt's policies," for example, his closing of the banks. What right did he have to hold their money? But these policies proved to be somewhat effective and resentment decreased. Then along came World War II and all was forgotten.

In 1934, the town started placing fire hydrants along populated roads. This would continue for some time. Defective hydrants would be replaced. The annual insurance rate for firemen had been raised to twelve dollars. In June, 1940, the rural farming region of North Amityville organized the

North Amityville Fire Company Inc. This was set up to service the farmlands located north of what is now Sunrise Highway. In a year and a half the United States would enter World War II, and thoughts of depression would be replaced with thoughts of Nationalism and war time production. For Amityville's firemen, this meant a loss of manpower, yet the shortage did not affect seriously the organization's ability to operate.

A new truck and new equipment were purchased in 1947, and from then on the equipment was updated as was necessary. In 1951 a Fire - Police program was instituted to help the department's efficiency. The Fire - Police direct traffic and guard against unnecessary hazards. 1955 saw J.R. Robertson Sr., the former Fire Chief, (1947-49), organize a Fire prevention program. The functions of this organization were to educate people about fires, and how to prevent them from happening. This was the first such program in Suffolk County, and was later duplicated in other towns.

As of this date the Amityville Volunteer Fire Department consists of: Hose Company Number 1 and Dauntless Hose and Engine Number 2, whose primary duties are to supply the extinguishing agent, stretch hoses, supply the streams needed, apply the water and provide the master streams. Chemical Number 3 supplies chemical extinguishers when they are needed. Hook and Ladder Number 1 controls the placing and use of ladders, rescues, forcible entry, ventilation, first aid, salvage and they provide elevated streams. The Fire - Police as mentioned earlier, direct traffic around the fires. The Emergency Squad provides medical attention to victims. Last but not least, the Ladies Auxiliary is always there to lend a hand when one is needed.

THE AMITYVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT: ITS BEGINNING THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Kathy Chichester

The Amityville Police Department was established in 1894 by the Amityville Village Board of Trustees: Charles Wood, President, George T. Homan and William Skinner, Trustees, Willis B. Inglee, Treasurer, John Kortright, Tax Receiver, and Samuel P. Hildreth, Village Clerk. The Board appointed Charles Howenstein as Police Constable on July 26, 1894. He received fifteen dollars a month, a policeman's cap and a badge. His duties consisted of safeguarding the lives and property of the Amityville inhabitants, and giving the village all the protection he and his bicycle would allow.

Charles Howenstein was replaced by James Shea on July 5, 1895. Other men who served as Police Constables from 1898 - 1906 include Theodore Stratton, Michael Dunn, Louis Ketcham, Edward Stratton, Edward Petty and Peter Karst.

In 1904, the Village Board appointed Edwin H. Stratton as Police Captain (today's 'Chief') and Louis Ketcham as his assistant. In July, a motor vehicle law went into effect and the village hired Adam Molle and Peter Karst, bringing the force up to a total of four men. Special Constables appointed to enforce the vehicle law were W.H. Cornelius, M.F. Whalen, Harry Inglee, Seville Howell, Robert E. Tuthill, and Frank Pearsall.

Most of the auto traffic from New York City through Amityville was handled by Merrick Road. At the time, 1907, it was a dirt road with a 10 mph speed limit. With the help of a few local residents, the police chief would set up a "speed trap" on weekends. The "trap" consisted of one man with a signal flag, and another man a certain distance away with a stopwatch. "When the man with the signal flag thought a car was speeding past him, he would signal the man with the stopwatch, who would time the vehicle. Then a third man would pull a rope with a red flag across the center of the roadway and the alleged speeding car would have to come to a stop in order to avoid hitting the rope." (1) One end of the rope was usually tied to a tree, but if enough people were around to help, they held the other end. The man with the stopwatch would calculate the speed of the car by dividing the time it took the car to stop, into the known distance. If the driver was found to be speeding, he could pay a fine on the spot or appear in court on a given date. "This speed trap became so notorious that a sign was put up on the Brooklyn Bridge stating 'BEWARE AMITYVILLE'." (2)

During the early years of the Police Department, patrolmen had no specific posts or duties. They spent most of their time walking and patrolling the village stores and bars. However, a picket fence on Greene Ave., to the rear of Albertson's Drug Store (Phanemiller's), was a good location to observe the village. It was here that Captain Ed Stratton took his stance.

Each patrolman on the Amityville force received fifty dollars a month.

They also received twenty cents a mile for escorting prisoners via the Long Island Railroad to the County Jail in Riverhead. Only the prisoners that were convicted of a crime punishable for more than thirty days were taken there, and they were taken in handcuffs. This money served as an incentive for an officer to make a good arrest.

Most of the arrests made were for public intoxication and vagrancy, and no records of these arrests were kept. Those guilty of these minor offenses were confined to one of the two cells in the Jail House located on the corner of West Oak Street and Burch Avenue. These same two cells were transported and installed in the new Police Headquarters in 1924.

In 1919, the patrolmen received eighty-five dollars a month and Chief Stratton's salary was one hundred dollars per month until his resignation in 1920. The Village Board then appointed Barton F. Howe to Chief and William Klein as Lieutenant.

Under the guidance of Dr. John F. Louden, Village President and Mayor, the Police Department received some of the greatest advancements of its time. Dr. Louden appointed a commission to study New York City police methods, and he patterned the village force accordingly. Four men were patrolling the village, either on foot or on bicycle. Dr. Louden added Robert Fallot to the force as a motorcycle officer in 1922 when the department purchased its first motorcycle. He also eliminated the large gong in the center of the village which summoned officers to the telephone. A police booth was then installed at Broadway and Greene Avenue. This booth had a policeman on duty 24 hours a day to answer telephone complaints, as it had a direct line to the Nassau County Police Department and the New York City Police Department. The officer on duty also directed traffic when necessary by means of manual stop and go signals.

The Amityville Police Blotter was first initiated on October 25, 1922. It contained times and dates of police requests, arrests, and activities filed according to the callers last name and the date of the call. "During the first year of its operation, there were 424 requests for a patrolman, 729 arrests, 719 violations of village ordinances, 5 public intoxications, 2 driving while intoxicated, 2 for violation of the Sullivan Law, and 1 for assault in the third degree." (3)

In 1923, the village raised funds with cake sales, bazaars, and raffles in order to purchase an ambulance. Policemen operated the service and they responded to accidents and emergencies in the village and in adjoining communities. The ambulance service was non-profit and it was supported by the village until 1942.

The Municipal Building was built in 1924 and it gave the department a modern police headquarters, thus doing away with the booth. An up to date switchboard, a daily blotter, regular patrol shifts, and other improvements followed.

In 1925 Chief Howe resigned, and with the support of the Ku Klux Klan, he became Suffolk County Sheriff. (4) Lieutenant Klein took over as Chief and Joseph Keller was his Sergeant. Dr. Louden remained as head of the village government until 1927 when illness forced him to retire. During

his time in office, the Amityville Police Department became the finest in the county.

Claud Lapsly became mayor and he put a great deal of time and energy into improving the department as did his successor, Edgar R. Foster. William Klein left the department in 1929, and Robert Fallot became the Amityville Chief.

During Mr. Fallot's tenure as commanding officer, further progress was made within the department. More call boxes and new traffic lights were installed, and a motorcycle and an ambulance were in use. Also in use were two 1935 Chevrolets, purchased by the village and equipped with one way radios hooked up to the Nassau County Police Department. When the Amityville Police Deskman received a call for assistance in the village, he would call the Nassau Police and they would broadcast directly into the Amityville car.

In 1935, C. Rulef Duryea became mayor. He was unfamiliar with the routine of the department at the time of his election, but he soon familiarized himself with the details. During 1935, the department received 3,004 telephone calls alone. "There were 712 requests for patrolmen, 95 aided cases, 83 accident cases, 1075 alarms received, and 54 arrests made on complaints ranging from arson to traffic violation." (5)

The Village of Amityville is located on the Nassau-Suffolk line and because of this, the Amityville Police have worked in cooperation with both the Nassau and Suffolk County Police Departments. When the village installed its one way radio units into the police cars in 1935, it had to rely on the Nassau Police to get messages to them. In 1942, the village installed a two way radio system with its own transmitter at police headquarters.

The two way radio was a great advancement in police communications and a benefit to the Amityville citizens. What better way to begin the post-Depression period than with a giant step forward.

Interview with Charles Haverty - 81 year old Amityville resident

Amityville, the Bay Village located on the south shore of Long Island, was an ideal location for the smuggling sales of liquor during the Great Depression. Liquor transporters, called "Rumrunners", and Bootleggers were very active in Amityville throughout the thirties.

During the hard economic times of the Depression, one could easily make a few bucks by transporting liquor from off-shore boats to the mainland. "Rumrunners" were those who went out to the big boats to pick up a few cases to bring back to the island. It is said that the carrier boats came from England. They situated themselves at least three miles off shore, because that was the naval law, and contacted the rumrunners. The rumrunners would pick up the liquor via the Jones Beach Inlet, or the Fire Island Inlet. Coast Guard cutters would patrol east and west of the inlets, but they would never catch the rumrunners because they did not know about a back route called the Little Inlet. The Coast Guard also did not know that one of their own men, namely the captain, was helping the rum-

runners. The captain was stationed at Eigh-hill Beach, station 87, in the lighthouse. He was supposedly being bribed by the rumrunners to tell them where the Coast Guard patrollers were going. If the patrollers were heading west, then he would shine the lighthouse light to the west. If they were headed east, he would shine the light to the east. In this way, the rumrunners would know whether or not to head in the opposite direction, or to hide and wait for the Coast Guard to pass them.

If the rumrunner successfully outsmarted the Coast Guard on the water, he sometimes had to face the Amityville Police on the shore. It is a little bit easier though if the officer that finds you accepts bribes and does not turn you in, which some supposedly did.

Police Related Newspaper Headlines of the Great Depression Period
1929 - 1941

"STRANGE TELEPHONE NOISES SEND POLICEMEN SCURRYING"

The operator notified the Amityville Police Department that strange noises were coming over the wires from the home of an Amityville resident. Policemen investigated and found a three year old child home alone, crying into the receiver.

The Amityville Record, Jan. 3, 1930

"CAN THE POLICEMEN TAKE OFF THEIR JACKETS?"

The question of whether or not policemen could take off their jackets while on duty was asked at a village Board Meeting. The issue was thrown into the files and never asked about again.

The Amityville Village Board Minutes,
July 28, 1930

"YOUNG POLICE DOG IS RESCUED FROM FLOODED AMITYVILLE CELLAR."

A sturdy young police dog stood shivering in ice cold water far down in the unfurnished cellar of what was once to have been a theatre on Merrick Road.

The Long Island Sun, Jan. 6, 1933

"VANDALS ENTER AMITYVILLE HOME; RANSACK ROOMS AND SLEEP THERE.

An Amityville family went on vacation for a week and when they returned, they found a few unpleasant surprises. All the rooms had been ransacked, the locks on the trunks had been broken open, bureau drawers jimmied open and other damage was done. The beds had been slept in and cigarette ashes were all over the floor.

The Amityville Record, Jan. 27, 1933

"AMITYVILLE SCHOOL SAFE BURGLARIZED"

Thieves broke into the school by breaking open the auditorium window. They smashed the combination lock on the safe and stole $396.66 belonging to students and teachers saving for a school trip. The only clue found by police was a smeared hand print.

The Long Island Sun, April 17, 1933

"THREE YOUNG MAN CONFESS TO BOMB AND EXPLOSION PRANK"

Three boys confessed to setting off a homemade bomb on Ocean Avenue in the former Brown's Boatyard on Easter Sunday. They said that they meant no harm and they just wanted to "make some noise." They have to report to the police chief every Saturday morning until further notice.

The Amityville Record, April 28, 1933

"SHAKE-UP HITS AMITYVILLE POLICE FORCE - CAPTAIN ROBERT FALLOT REAPPOINTED AS HEAD; VILLAGE BOARD MAKES CHANGES."

Numerous rumors and unfounded criticisms held as constantly undermining efficient policing program.

The Long Island Sun, April 7, 1933

"SQUAD OF POLICEMEN SWARM OVER THE SARNO RESIDENCE SEARCHING FOR BURGLER REPORTED TRAPPED IN HOUSE."

'Jocko' Sarno was surrounded in his residence on Richmond Avenue late Friday night by a squad of grimfaced policemen answering a burglary alarm. Jocko couldn't make a break for the woods because Mrs. Dominick Sarno had locked him in the cellar, so he just waited in the cellar. When police brought the burglar out from the cellar, they found him to be the Sarno's pet monkey, mistaken for an intruder.

The Long Island Sun, August 7, 1936

"AMITYVILLE POLICE NAB THREE BABY BURGLERS."

Boys 11, 12, and 15 involved another boy, 7, in a series of thefts. The trio burglarized homes from Amityville to Lindenhurst, where they picked up their 7 year old accomplice. The thefts ended abruptly when Patrolman William Kay leaped from a hiding place, catching the youngsters in the act.

Brooklyn Eagle, April 12, 1940

VILLAGE OF AMITYVILLE BUDGET 1930 - 1931

Amityville Police Department

Salaries - 11 men	$20,280	
Maintenance	1,500	
Equipment	1,500	
Uniforms	1,000	
Car	400	
Miscellaneous	100	(that year the Department purchased 12 guns at $16.00 per gun)
Traffic Marking	500	
Miscellaneous	500	

FOOTNOTES

1. Kay, William, "History of the Amityville Police Department" (January 26, 1972), p. 2

2. Ibid, p.2

3. Zirpolo, "History of the Amityville Police Department: (1966), p.3

4. Chalmers, David M., Hooded Americanism (N.Y. Doubleday and Co., Inc. 1965), p.260

5. Fallot, Robert, "Safeguarding lives and Property. Police protection Began when Village was Incorporated" (April 3, 1936), p.1

THE AMITYVILLE FREE LIBRARY

Laura Wimmers

Amityville is a small and beautiful village in the Town of Babylon, which is on Long Island. It was originally called Huntington-south West Neck. It became Amityville about ten years before the Civil War when a post office was established in the village and its citizens decided that a new name was needed. A committee was established to find a proper name for the village. But it was soon realized that finding a new name was not going to be very easy because the committee members could not agree on a name. The meetings often became very heated and disruptive. Mrs. Ruth Williams, a member of the committee, tried to restore order to the meetings and the words she spoke also decided the name of the village. (1) She said "Friends, what this meeting needs is some amity, otherwise we should name our village Contraryville." Amity was restored to the meeting and Amityville became the new name of the village. (2)

A number of changes can be seen in Amityville before the onset of World War I. Many new things appeared in the community. A Fire Department was established in 1886. The first brick schoolhouse in Amityville appeared in 1894 and it was called Park North Elementary School. A one constable Police Department was set up in 1894. Two local newspapers began to circulate in Amityville after the turn of the century. One was the Long Island Sun, which first appeared in 1911, and the other was the Amityville Record, which was first published in 1901. They have all changed throughout the years but they are still a very important part of the history of Amityville. (3)

Many clubs and organizations were also established during this period. However, one club in particular would have a major influence on the building of the first Amityville library. This club was the Amityville Literary Society, which first met on March 9, 1904. Originally it was called the Wednesday Afternoon Club and its main objective was to have a library built for the people of Amityville. Mrs. Mary P. Myton became the president of the Society in 1907 and without her there would not have been a library. Her main objective as the President was to establish a library for the people of Amityville and her dedication to its establishment should be commended. (4)

A Library Association was established on May 7, 1907 to help further the cause for a library. The president of this Association became Mr. William Skinner, who would serve as the president until 1933. He asked for a committee to draw up a constitution for the Association that would say what its main purpose would be. A constitution was made up by the committee and it was accepted by the members of the Association. (5) The object of the Association according to the constitution was "to maintain a circulating library and reading room free for public use to the inhabitants of the Amityville School District." (6)

The Literary Society held a book social which would provide books for the new library. To be admitted one had to donate a book to the Literary Society. Sixty-seven books were collected by the Literary Society and they

were put at the disposal of the Library Association. The books were sent to the home of Mrs. Warren Purdy, a member of the Literary Society. There the books were made available to the citizens of the community. (7)

More books soon came in and Mrs. Purdy was no longer able to store the books. A new place would have to be found to store them. The president of the Library Association, Mr. Skinner, obtained permission to keep them in the parish hall of St. Mary's Church. (8) The books were moved over to the hall and were once again made available for public use. However, the problem of storing the incoming books arose once more. Too many books were coming in and there was not enough space to store them all. Another place would have to be found or else a library building would have to be built.

The Board of Directors of the library decided that a library would have to be built. A door to door drive was held and enough money was obtained to build a small wooden building on the west side of Broadway near Ireland Place. (9) The library opened a few years before the beginning of World War I. A Miss Helen Badger became the librarian in 1915. She received a salary of twenty-five cents an hour. This salary would later be increased to fifty cents an hour because of the fine job she was doing as librarian. She improved the services of the library and she had several ideas that were put into practice. When the Library Extension Division said that all libraries should keep records of their local history available to the public, she sent letters to other libraries to get information on the local history of Amityville. (10)

On Saturday, February 19, 1925, just four years before the Stock Market crashed, the wooden building was replaced by a two story brick building with a basement for storage. The money to build the library also came from a door to door drive. The total cost to build the library was approximately forty-one thousand dollars. (11)

The old library on Broadway, near Ireland Place.

The library was opened every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 2:30 to 5:30 and from 7:00 to 9:30. During these hours people were allowed to take out books, if they returned them in two weeks. To take them out all one had to do was sign the inside much like we do in our school libraries today. Problems would develop about turning in books on time and several solutions were tried. But there was very little success with them and they were usually abandoned after a few weeks.

Service increased greatly prior to the years of the Depression. The Literary Society donated twenty-five dollars worth of books to the library and a pay shelf was established for these books. After a borrower paid a certain amount of money, he could take out a book from the pay shelf for seven days. The pay shelf soon became self-supporting because of its immense popularity. Many popular books were later added to it. (12)

In 1931 the Board of Trustees decided that the Amityville Free Library should only provide service to the residents of the Incorporated Village of Amityville. Prior to 1931 the library had provided service for a number of neighboring towns and villages. The Board was unable to follow through with their plan at the time, but when discussions did reopen, the Trustees' plan was followed. (13) The Board also discussed the possibility of putting the basement of the library to good use. The basement was being used for nothing at the time and it was felt that something should be done with it. So they started to discuss the options they had. They wanted to use the basement as a meeting room or a room for children to see puppet shows and plays in. (14) However, nothing could be done at the time because the library owed some money to a bank.

In 1932 the Amityville Free Library celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. A play was put on to mark the important occasion. The library managed all the arrangements for the play, which was called "The Whole Town's Talking", including the entertainment, the publicity, and the funds. The whole thing was a big success and when it was over the library had even made a profit of sixty dollars. (15)

A State Supervisor came to inspect the library in 1933 and he told the Trustees that the library would have to be opened more because it also served the community of Copiague. The Trustees felt that the library could not be opened those extra hours so they wrote to the State Library asking for advice. The State told them to amend their constitution to exclude Copiague and then there would be no more problems. The constitution was amended to say "The object of the Association will be to maintain a circulating library and reading room free for Public School District #6, Town of Babylon, Suffolk County and Town of Oyster Bay, Nassau County." (16) With this amendment the library became an association library that received tax money from the Incorporated Village of Amityville. This meant that the library could be supported by the school district if the voters of the district agreed. The voters supported the idea and the library became a part of the school district.

In 1934, Miss Helen Badger became seriously ill and she had to take a leave of absence. Unfortunately her illness was very serious and she died soon after. She had served the library for twenty-three years and she had helped to enhance its service to the community. She would be dearly missed by all who knew her. (17)

The Trustees hired Miss Shirley Robinson, who later became Mrs. Shirley Homans, to be the new librarian. She was studying at the Columbia University Library School so she could not begin working immediately. Therefore, she began on October 1, 1934 and she proved to be an asset to the library. She became the first librarian to attend the meetings of the Board of Trustees. She served as librarian until December 14, 1939. (18) A month after she started, the Board of Trustees accepted a new plan that meant the library would be able to loan and borrow books from libraries in Nassau County.

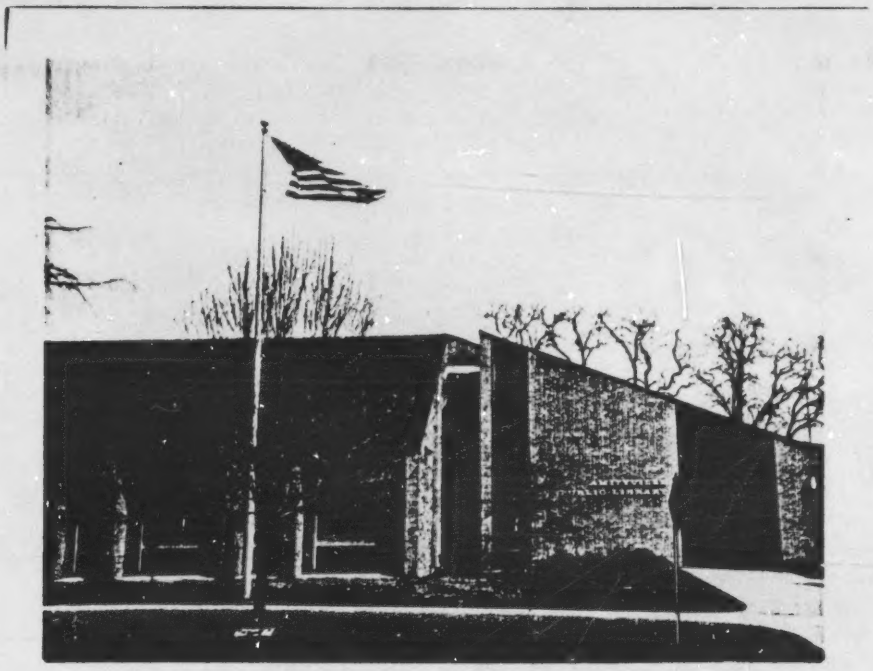
On July 9, 1935 Mr. Skinner retired as president of the Library Association. He had been a member of the Association since its founding and supported it even after he resigned. He was replaced by Helmar Peterson, who was the principal of the grade school at the time. Mr. Skinner was given an honorary position on the Board of Trustees which enabled him to attend all of the meetings that would be held. He attended as many as he could until he died in 1945. (19)

Skinner's replacement was a new member to the Board of Trustees. Many responsibilities would be placed before him and he would handle them all brilliantly. During his first year in office the library budget became a part of the school budget. This meant the library would receive money from the Village ($1500) and from the Union Free School District #6 ($2500) (20)

The Depression did have an affect on the library until it ended with the beginning of World War II. However, it was not a very major effect. The Depression seriously affected the supply of money that the library needed to keep operating during this time. The people in the community managed to keep the library going by donating whatever money they could spare. Mrs. Myton's daughter Grace donated $4600 in memory of her mother on March 8, 1939. (21)

Mrs. Marion Chichester took Mrs. Homans place after she resigned in 1939. She improved the efficiency of the library and its service to the community. During her time there a noticeable increase was seen in the circulation of books. Her salary was raised to a thousand dollars a year during the first year of her time there. (22) There were other librarians there during the years since the library was founded who helped the library greatly. Some of them include Doris Young, Hedda Woblebe, Ann Drayton, and Miss Catherine Fitz. Miss Fitz was the last librarian to serve in the brick library on the west side of Broadway near Ireland Place. (23)

After World War II ended the population of Amityville began to grow rapidly. In 1940 the population of Amityville was approximately 5,058 people. By 1950 the population had increased to 6,164 people (24) Miss Fitz and the Board of Trustees realized that a bigger and permanent home was needed for the Amityville Free Library. There had been a large increase in the number of books over the past few years and the small brick library was no longer able to store all the books. It was also decided that the new library would be publically funded instead of being privately funded. It would function within the school district and therefore it would be funded by the state. A location was found on the corner of Oak Street and construction began. The new library was completed and opened in 1972. It is a beautiful modern library that has two stories and many special provisions for its members. (25)



The New Library on Oak Street

There are over 70,000 books available for its 9000 members. This number is forty times that of the original library. The original library only had about 2000 books available for 471 borrowers. (26) The new library is something that everyone in Amityville should use and be proud of. It provides a very helpful and cultural experience to anyone who is interested in reading.

Much is owed to the foresight of Mrs. Myton and the Amityville Literary Society. Their dedication to the establishment of a library should be recognized by everyone who goes into the Amityville Free Library. The efforts of everyone who made possible the establishment of each and every library that Amityville has had should also be commended. They have helped to provide a service that will always be necessary to the people of Amityville.

Endnotes

1. Mary A. Homans, "Amityville - Past and Present," 1939, unpublished, p.1.

2. "A New Amityville Post Office Dedicated in Year of History," The Long Island Sun, October 8, 1959, p.22.

3. Long Island Sun, op. cit., April 13, 1961, p.15.

4. "Women Have Full Share in Progress of Community," The Long Island Sun, April 13, 1961, p.7.

5. Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Trustees of the Amityville Free Library, April 17, 1907.

6. Constitution of the Amityville Library Association, Article III.

7. The Long Island Sun, op. cit., April 13, 1961, p.23.

8. "Amityville's Library," A Backwards Glance, Cecile H. Ruggles, p.66.

9. Ibid., p.67.

10. William Skerynek, The History of the Amityville Free Library from 1904 to 1954, 1965, p.46.

11. "New Library Absolutely Sure," The Long Island Sun, September 17, 1926, p.1.

12. Interview with Mr. Seth Purdy, curator of the Amityville Historical Society, on October 11, 1983.

13. William Skerynek, The History of the Amityville Free Library from 1904 to 1954, 1965, p.46.

14. Ibid., p.47.

15. "Amityville Library has 25th Birthday," The Long Island Sun, December 12, 1932, p.1.

16. Minutes, op. cit., May 12, 1933.

17. William Skerynek, The History of the Amityville Free Library from 1904 to 1954, 1965, p.49.

18. Ibid., p.50.

19. Ibid., p.51-52.

20. Ibid., p.53.

21. Ibid., p.55.

22. Ibid., p.57.

23. "Amityville's Library," A Backwards Glance, Cecile H. Ruggles, p.68.

24. Statistical Abstract of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, Long Island, New York, p.6.

25. "Amityville's Library," A Backwards Glance, Cecile Ruggles, p.68.

26. Ibid., p.68.

AMITYVILLE DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION - EDUCATION

Brad Franklin

In 1894, the Amityville Grammar School was erected. The taxpayers approved this because the increase in the population of the district grew to require a school building larger than the houses which were previously used. This building, known today as Park North, served well for grades one through twelve. Eventually, a west wing was added to it. In 1923, a new structure was built to meet the needs of the growing student body. It stands as Park South today. At the time it was erected, it contained the largest gymnasium in the county. Officially, this was the entire district school, but in times of repair and construction local buildings or even private homes were used as classrooms.

The school in Amityville during the early part of this century had a very different role than it does today. The most significant differences relate to the much smaller, growing, community. This area was truly just emerging out of being a sparse bay farming village. Each person knew just about everyone within a square mile by name.

The village schoolhouse was the cornerstone of the family community. More than just a study place, it was a visible achievement of the people in the developing community. It was utilized by community groups to a much greater extent than it is today.

The era of the 1930's may be viewed as the time when many changes were occuring in Amityville to distinguish it from its 19th century self. The district was officially named the Joint Union Free School District No. 6 of the Towns of Babylon, (in) Suffolk County and Oyster Bay, (in) Nassau County, New York. It contained a much larger area than does Amityville Union Free School district. The population had been growing in size since the school was opened, and would continue to grow for many years to come. This growth certainly was the greatest influence on Amityville through the Great Depression.

In 1930, the high school held commencement ceremonies for forty-four

students. By 1935, the "Echo," the school newspaper, had finally found it necessary to stop publishing short commentaries on each of the graduating students. The "Echo" also had a section for riddles, many of which pertained to certain students. Throughout the paper, which was only issued once per year, almost every student was mentioned for some characteristic notoriety.

In the high school, there were many more activities per student than there are today. In fact, the number of school-sponsored after-school activities at this time is about equal to that of today. There were art clubs, social clubs, pre-professional clubs, and baseball, football, basketball, wrestling, girls' basketball, and girls' field hockey (all of which played home games on a village rather than school field) and others. The "Echo" staff, for example, consisted of at least one-fifth of the senior class. Students who were not obligated to helping in a father's general store, on a farm, or out on the bay, preferred to spend a great deal of their free time at the school.

Academically, the students of this time weren't uniformly more serious or less serious than those of today. In fact, in most instances it is correct to assume that, aside from the numbers, students of the two eras have much in common.

The Board of Education was composed much the same as it is today. There were, besides trustees, a president, vice-president, treasurer, and clerk. Committees were maintained for Finance, Building and Grounds, Transportation, Teachers, Visitation, Health and Physical Education, and Purchasing. The meetings were not generally attended by other officials, though the Supervising Principal attended a meeting in 1931. The Board met generally once a month, but many special meetings were also called.

The School Board was able to take direct action on the more common matters of the day. As the district grew, though, a divergence of duties occurred. During the 30's the Board began to let committees and the Supervising Principal take care of things such as the school lunch budget and approving the proposed list of graduating students.

The population growth which continued in Amityville held the Board's attention throughout the Depression. In November 1930, only seven years after the last addition to the school was made, the Board adopted a resolution that an "intensive campaign be started to educate the inhabitants of the district to the need of additional school facilities." (1) The campaign was successful, for in 1932, the building today known as Park Central was completed. Two of the three buildings which served well for all of the district children through the Depression today hold only the fourth and fifth grades of the Amityville school district - Park North contains the District Offices.

Many of the issues which the school board of this time faced are foreign to educators today; some are not. The state school system of the time was less complex, and certainly had more presence than ours today. A letter received by the School Board from the Compulsory Attendence Division in Albany attests to this well. If its purpose would not be unlikely today, its method certainly is. (Regarding the father of two girls, aged 12 and 14, who had been excessively absent).

"If it be true that Smith (name changed) fails to comply with the law, I want your Board to take necessary steps to have him arrested, prosecuted and punished so severely that he will be glad to obey it.

I have no desire to make a threat but unless this law is properly enforced, I will undertake to see that your district fails to get its school money."

A group important in the village at this time was the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1925, this organization selected the topic for a grammar school essay. They chose the topic to be "Our Flag".

Racial issues have roots far back in Amityville's history. In the late 30's, a group of black parents came before the Board concerning alleged verbal abuse and academic discrimination. The Board refuted the claim, but assured that if any such occurances are recognized, they will be dealt with.

The degree of development which the district undertook during the Depression was indeed ironic. The dramatic increase in the number of students was the cause. It was not merely local, and there are many factors to which population growth during the Depression may be attributed. Many people, after losing their jobs, moved out from the city.

Whatever its causes, this growth was important. The School Board was faced with the necessity of great capital expenditures in the midst of a severe economic depression. The Central building was built, nonetheless, in 1932. The school heating system was overhauled, roof repairs were made, and more teachers were hired, all during the Depression. There is no indication that the economic situation ever threatened these actions. Much time was spent, of course, deliberating over the most efficient procedures, but it would not be prohibitive in cost, and obviously needed doing - so it was done. There were no instances of the school budget being "voted down" during this traumatic decade.

Yet the Depression struck Amityville hard. Businesses and farmers did go bankrupt, interest rates plummeted, and people lost jobs. The most prominent effect on the district was the cut in teacher's salaries in 1933 (the salaries of principals are also in this category). The Board of Education, after much deliberation and investigation of the actions of adjacent districts, carried a resolution that the teachers' salaries for the 1933-34 school year be progressively reduced by between ten and thirteen percent. It was also adopted that no teacher's salary be cut to below fourteen hundred dollars. For example, the Supervising Principal, whose salary was previously $5,500, received over seven hundred dollars less that year. By 1938, this position was still paid less than it had been ten years before.

Along with internal adjustments during the Depression, the Board made many efforts to help the village community. Being members of the community themselves, the School Board members felt the pervading effects of living under a depressed economy. Their familiarity with the community certainly intensified the awareness of the school directors toward economizing. In the various projects undertaken during the Depression the Board cooperated with the Works Progress Administration. Thay also reorganized their janitorial assignments, seemingly in response to a dramatic increase in appli-

cations for this job. The Board, in the middle of the construction of Park Central, was informed that many of the construction workers were from out of town. They demanded that local hands be used, and were obliged.

Both the school and the community were fortunate that while the budget was necessarily increased consistently during the Depression, the amount to be raised by taxation generally was decreased. This was made possible early on by the institution of non-resident tuition. The beginning of state aid in 1935 was an incredible boon to the district. Also, in 1937, the Town of Oyster Bay was given a proportion of the tax burden (13.77% - determined by property valuation). Until this time Babylon assumed all of the district's tax burden, probably because Oyster Bay was not considered of appreciable value before this. This did not reduce the total tax amount, but spread a share of the taxes. These factors combined to keep the school taxes low at a crucial period in Amityville's history. Although the support of the community was unfaltering, it would be interesting to see the limit at which the budget would have been defeated.

During the Depression, the Board was learning of a new and important area of concern: insurance. Many times insurance issues and needs were brought to light. In 1936, a nearby district was successfully sued for thirty thousand dollars by the mother of a child who hurt himself by falling on school grounds. In 1938, the Park Avenue Schools were valuated, and the district took out an Insurance Policy. An Insurance Committee was added to the other Board committees.

As the student body grew, more students were given to each field of interest. The number of teachers grew largely to accomodate more subjects rather than just to increase the number of teachers in each subject. Teachers were contracted in: Mathematics, Science, History, Latin, Physical Education, English, Home Economics, Commercial (Business), Science-History, German, Shop, Art, and Opportunity, (likely a semblance of today's career development courses) with the last three being added during the course of the Depression.

Concern with academic achievement of the district had been strong before the Depression, and continued so. Twice during the thirties, a report was received from the state which suggested that this quality was lacking in some areas. The Board was assuaged by this comparison by one of its members:

Year	*Average Grade State	District
1928	79.5	85.8
1929	78.5	83.6
1930	80.5	90.0
1931	82.3	88.2

*It must be realized that there was no standard grading system.

It 1936, the Board was upset when they learned that the district was not included in a list of exceptionally good schools on Long Island. They inquired into the matter, and, though nothing else came of it, strengthened their call for improvement.

The Depression seemed to be a time of statewide call for improvement in education. In 1938, the Board discussed the comparative value of the single and two-track system. They had converted to the single-track system during the previous decade, but decided to readopt the accelerated course curriculum for achieving students.

Amityville at this time was developing and expanding. The Great Depression put a damper on this, but did not prove detrimental to the growth of the school system. Instead, the district, which had so much support from its people, became a source of aid and unity. Education itself was a stronghold throughout the troubled times.

SOURCES

All first hand:

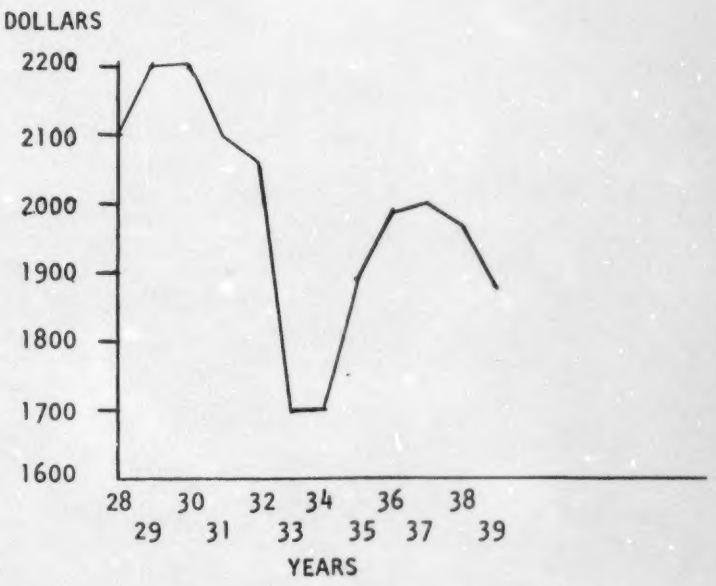
Budget and Salary figures from the minutes of the Board of Education, School District no.6, 1925 to 1940.

1. The Minutes of the Board of Education School District No.6, 1925-1939.

Budget 1925-1926

Business Administration	
Elections and notices	$ 50.00
Clerk's salary	500.00
Treasurer's salary	250.00
Business supplies and printing	240.00
Other expenses of business administration	400.00
Educational Administration	
Census	175.00
Truant officer	800.00
Instruction	
Salary of principal	3,800.00
Salary of principal's clerk	1,700.00
Other expenses of principal's office	250.00
Salaries of teachers	45,000.00
Text books	3,000.00
School supplies	1,000.00
Other expenses of instruction	500.00
Operation of School Plant	
Salaries of janitors	6,000.00
Fuel	4,000.00
Water	100.00
Light and power	700.00
Janitor's supplies	500.00
Other expenses of operating plant	50.00
Maintenance of School Plant	
Repair of Buildings	2,000.00
Repair and replacement of heating, lighting and plumbing	500.00
Repair and replacement of furniture and equipment	200.00
Other expenses of maintenance	100.00
Auxiliary Agencies and Sundry Activities	
Library	200.00
Transportation of pupils	2,000.00
Salary of medical inspector	200.00
Salary of nurse	1,400.00
Other auxiliary agencies and activities	300.00
Debt Service	
Interest on notes	200.00
Redemption of bonds	14,000.00
Interest on bonds	9,850.00
Acquisition and Construction	
Heating, lighting, plumbing and electrical	250.00
Purchase of furniture	1,000.00
Purchase of instructional apparatus	1,000.00
Other capital outlay	1,000.00
Total	$105,975.00
Less public money	8,000.00
To be raised by taxation	$ 97,975.00

7 31



AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY

BUSINESS IN AMITYVILLE

FROM 1929 - 1939

Steven Falldorf and John Gordon

The depression of the 1930's affected every American town, big or small. This included the rural town of Amityville. The Amityville business community was not as hard hit during the depression as one would imagine. Nevertheless, the townfolk and businesses suffered. The businesses in Amityville were forced to use various techniques in order to survive the great depression. Some businesses did not survive, but many of those that did can still be seen today. Most of them agree that if you worked hard, and charged fair prices, you probably would have survived the "ten years of hell." (1)

Many businesses that were operating in Amityville during the depression were family owned. The owners usually lived over or behind the store for convenience. Due to the economy, the owners of these businesses had to work long, hard hours. They were willing to work like this because money was desperately needed to support their families. For example, Mr. Lang of Lang's Shoe Store had to work from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. every weekday and Saturday. (2) Vacations were rarely mentioned and almost never taken. Charles Klarmann of Amityville Feed Supply worked for twelve years without a vacation, (3) while Mr. Lang worked for seventeen years without the benefit of one. (4)

If merchants wanted to stay in business during these hard times they had to provide their customers with high quality service and merchandise. Some merchants, such as Phannemiller's Pharmacy, extended their customers credit so that they could pay at the end of the year. (5) This exemplified the great deal of trust and concern that the merchants had for their customers; the way that the owners went out of their way to please their customers. Powell Funeral Home, for example, would provide customers with a free funeral if they could not afford to pay for one. Losi's Fruit and Vegetable store would deliver to all of their customers by either car or bicycle from Amityville to Seaford.

These are some of the techniques which businessmen had to employ in order to stay in business. Each business used different techniques in accordance with the products they were trying to sell. For example, Lang's Shoe Store used to take all of their empty boxes and put them on the shelves in sight of the customers. (6) This made the people enthusiastic about the business, (when they saw how much inventory they had) and increased the store's prestige in Amityville.

The best and most obvious techniques employed was that of friendliness. This was easy because most store owners were in direct contact with their customers due to the fact that Amityville was still a young, growing community. Another factor which enhanced this was that the owners could sympathize with the customers. They also had to struggle to earn their money during this period. Jobs then were very dynamic, people were constantly being hired and fired to save the business money. A good example

FAMOUS PEOPLE AND THEIR ALIASES

Charlie Kattenbach - One of the original fishermen of Seaford. "Swede, Haywire, Kate."

Charley Ackerman - Big butter and Egg Man from Ocean Boulevard. "Fanny, Judy, Mabel."

Ronald Walley - The Versatile Actor from Broadway. "Chubby, Wal, Little Mac, Eddie, Big Chief."

Loretta Gay - The Darling, Dumb Daughter of Dixon. "Gabriella, Doiby, Ritzkers, Iggy."

Robert Lee - Dashing Young Lady-Killer from the Back Woods. "Hannah, Alma, Moses, Stretch."

Robert Palk - Champion Supporter of the Candy-Vendors. "Ittie Bittie Bobbsie Wobbsie."

Paul Hutcheson - The Massapequan Bridge Shark. "Audrey, Auds, Hutch, Professor."

Louis A. - The Fascinating Little Gangster from the Wild and Wooly City of Copiague. "Mussolini, Little Caesar, Apollo."

- -

(Samples of Graduating Seniors' Biographies)

DOUGLAS HAAB (Doug)

Expects to be Secretary of War next year
Pet Peeve--Cigarette grubbers
Favorite building--John's

SYLVIA HAYMOWITZ

Won numerals in Freshman interclass hockey
Hasn't least idea what she's going to do
Pet Peeve--The flavor pestachio
Favorite sport--Swimming

MARJORIE HEARTT (Marjie)

Manager of girl's basketball team '32-'33
Manager of Senior candy

Telephone 421
Michael Irrgang
CUSTOM TAILOR
Ladies' and Gents' Garments Cleaned, Dyed, Pressed and Repaired
140 Broadway
Amityville, N. Y

HARMS'
LUNCHEONETTE
AND
CONFECTIONERY
143 Merrick Road
Amityville
Business Men's Lunch Served
12 till 2

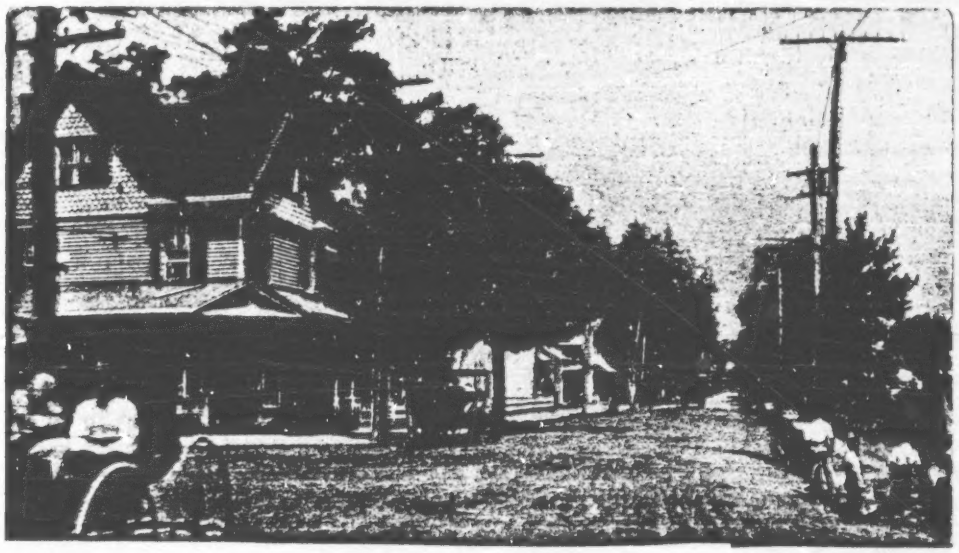
Ketcham & Colyer
Incorporated
INSURANCE
AND
REAL ESTATE
Broadway and Park Avenue
Amityville, N. Y.

Losi's Store, in 1946, Corner of Park Avenue and Ireland Place

of this was given by Doug Lang. His father earned nineteen dollars a week working in a laundromat, while his manager earned twenty-four dollars a week. The owners fired the manager and hired his father for that position at twenty-one dollars a week. The owners soon proceeded to fire his father and hire a new manager at seventeen dollars a week. (7) This was typical of life during the depression; rough and dynamic. Everyone had to do something to save any amount of money, large or small.

Some businesses became diversified in order to save money. Powell Funeral Home not only handled the undertaking of funerals, but also had a headstone, monument, and ambulance service business. (8) Lang's Shoe Store repaired and resoled shoes as well as selling them. (9) Also, the Amityville Men's Shop tailored clothes along with selling them. (10) Services such as the latter two were of extreme importance because one outfit had to last as long as possible. Most people could not afford to buy a new pair of shoes or a new suit often.

Although many store owners used different ways to keep their businesses afloat and profitable, some were not so lucky. The Gutterwicz Jewelry Store did not survive the depression simply for the reason that luxuries such as jewelry were not of primary concern to most people. They would rather buy food or clothing. Alternate ways to make money for a jeweler were somewhat limited and were dependent upon the fairly well-to-do people of the times, which were severly limited in number. On the other hand, Ralston's Grocery Store and Collner's Butcher Shop survived despite the fact that there was both an A & P and a Bohack Supermarket in Amityville. The reason for their survival was most likely the fact that they had fresher produce and meat than the larger stores did. These are good examples of how store owners catered to the needs of the community more efficiently in hard times to attract more business. One of the chief reasons why Powell Funeral Home survived was because their business did not rely on the economy as much as the others had. Their labor and overhead was relatively inexpensive, largely because wakes and sometimes other services were held in the home rather than the business itself. (11) This worked out cheaper for the deceased man's relatives as well.



Broadway, Amityville, in 1908

Another advantage for some businesses was the fact that they might have been the only or the largest business in the area. For example, Amityville had the only major shopping center in the area. This, in turn attracted many people from other towns such as Seaford, Massapequa, and Copaigue for groceries. Lang's Shoe Store was one of the biggest shoe stores for many miles (the empty boxes undoubtably helped). People as far away as Farmingdale and Northport came all the way to Amityville to buy

their grain, garden supplies and other livestock or farm needs at the Amityville Feed Supply. Back then the longer trip was worth it if any amount of money could be saved, or if better quality merchandise for the money existed.

Post Office and Bank Building
Built in 1892
Now Called Triangle Building

An unusual aspect of the depression is the fact that it brought many people closer together. Almost everyone suffered economic hardship during the depression and they rallied to help each other when the help was needed. Kind acts such as these would eventually be returned or passed along to someone else having the hardest of times. An example of this can be seen with the W.P.A. or the Workers Progress Administration. Many women gathered together in the basement of the Park Avenue School and sewed clothes for a dollar a day to help the poor who could not afford clothes. Many times people helped out their neighbors by giving them some odds and ends such as clothing and food when they needed it. Actions such as these made the depression a little more bearable and it inspired a sort of enthusiasm when people realized that there were other people who really cared.

The depression certainly was not an easy time to live in and survive through. Amityville was fortunate in that we did not have the bread lines or "Hoovervilles" that were commonplace throughout the country. People still had to wonder about their future and be extremely thrifty with what money was available. People had to use their ingenuity to come up with ideas and apply them properly, in some cases just to survive. There were some positive results that came from the depression in that the community of Amityville was brought closer together in rough times and store owners catered more to their customers and often gave them a very good deal on merchandise to secure the transaction. People cared about one another and helped each other which, in all likelihood, helped mold this community into what it is today.

FOOTNOTES

1. Interview with Irving Cohen of the Amityville Men's Shop, December 28, 1983.
2. Interview with Doug Lang of Lang's Shoes, December 28, 1983.
3. Interview with the manager of Amityville Grain and Feed Supply, January 6, 1984.
4. Interview with Doug Lang of Lang's Shoes, December 28, 1983.
5. Interview with Irving Cohen of the Amityville Men's Shop, December 28, 1983.
6. Interview with Doug Lang of Lang's Shoes, December 28, 1983.
7. Ibid
8. Interview with Wes Powell of the Powell Funeral Home, January 4, 1984.
9. Interview with Doug Lang of Lang's Shoes, December 28, 1983.
10. Interview with Irving Cohen of the Amityville Men's Shop, December 28, 1983.
11. Interview with Wes Powell of the Powell Funeral Home, January 4, 1984.

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1. Irving Cohen, interview with, December 28, 1983.
2. Doug Lang, interview with, December 28, 1983.
3. Wes Powell, interview with, January 4, 1984.
4. Manager of Amity Grain and Feed, interview with, January 6, 1984.

POLITICS IN AMITYVILLE: THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Kathy Korba and Lisa Grafstein

Politically speaking, Amityville was affected by the Great Depression, but to a much lesser degree than one might expect of a suburb during that period. It was a time when, because of economic circumstances, conservatism was evident. Yet because of a strong progressive spirit, improvements were prevalent. As a reflection of these conditions, the political scene in Amityville was stable but not stagnant.

Since 1894 when the first Village Board election was held, the Village of Amityville has been active in building, expanding, and improving the community. Despite a world-wide economic crisis, the Depression period was no exception.

On November 25, 1929, the Village Board voted unanimously to establish a Zoning Commission. The Commission was set up to survey Amityville, establish zones, and create a map of the area. Once established, the Commission hired E.M. Bassett, at a cost of $600.00, to help them with their task. After almost nine months of work, the Commission had created a comprehensive map of Amityville with areas designated as industrial, business, or residential.

In an obvious attempt at expansion and improvement, it was suggested, at the regular, bi-weekly Board meeting on January 13, 1930, that the Village should buy the local plant of the South Bay Consolidated Water Company in order to keep prices down for the Villagers. Although the water company refused the offer, the attempt was a prime example of how concerned the Board members were with the betterment of their town.

The Board members also pursued advances in the area of communications. On February 10, 1930, the Village Board issued a permit to the New York Telephone Company to install conduits that would allow residents on Park Avenue, Richmond Avenue, Warren Place and Cedar Place to own their own telephones.

In a different kind of communication, the Village Board of Amityville initiated a coalition of the village boards of all of the towns in the Town of Babylon. The coalition first met in the early part of 1930, with the intention of joining forces to deal with the issues that over-lapped boundary lines.

Major steps were taken by the Village Board's Street Committee to improve the appearance of the town. In 1930 alone, the Street Committee allocated over $23,000 for the construction and up-keep of the town's streets, sidewalks, and traffic lights. At a cost of between $128 and $140 per hundred feet, the Committee authorized the building of hundreds of feet of sidewalk on Amityville's major roads, including Park Avenue, Richmond Avenue, and Broadway. In addition, numerous repairs were made on the roads, streetlights, and existing sidewalks of Merrick Road, County Line Road, and Turner Place. In the early 1930's there was considerable talk and planning surrounding the proposed widening of Broadway. Although the project wasn't

completed until 1960, the idea originated in the Depression period and was a product of the expansion-oriented trend of that time. The long delay was due more to outside pressure than to reluctance on the part of the Street Committee or the Village Board.

A persistent thorn in the side of the Village Board was J.J. Darcy, head of the Town of Babylon division of the New York State Department of Public Works. The Board members felt that the Public Works Department should absorb part of the tremendous cost of widening Broadway and repairing Merrick Road because the State, they said, was partially responsible for the conditions on major roads. Darcy refused the Board's repeated requests for road repairs. He claimed that the widening of Broadway was completely unnecessary and that all road work was the responsibility of the Village where the work needed to be done. He angered the Board members further by adding that Amityville was the most uncooperative village in the Town of Babylon.

Although, by all indications thus far, it would seem that Amityville entered the third decade of this century unaffected by the Depression, apparently the nation's economic slump did catch up with the Village, for the Board began to borrow money from the local banks. In fact, between March, 1930 and March, 1931, the Board borrowed a combined amount of $39,000 from the First National Bank and Trust Company and the Bank of Amityville. To add to these obvious money problems, the Village was owed almost $9,000 in unpaid taxes for the year 1929. This amount constituted almost 12% of the total tax revenue the Board was to collect for the year.

As the economic crisis became more evident in Amityville, the townspeople became more critical of the ways in which the Board spent money. The large amount of money spent on streets and sidewalks, especially, came under fire by concerned citizens. Voicing the prevalent feeling of the time was Mr. S.P. Hildrette when he said, at a Village Board meeting, that it was "time for the municipalities to follow the government's lead and curtail expenditures rather than increase them..." Mr. Jacques P. LeBrunn, a Trustee on the Board, suggested that, as a compromise, the Street Fund should be limited to $15,000 per year. This proposal was voted on and it was agreed upon to make only the repairs that were really needed in order to minimize the spending of the Street Committee.

Despite their view of some of the Board's spending habits, the public seemed satisfied with the political leaders of the time. The political arena in Amityville had been dominated by the Union Party since April 10, 1894, when the party's (then called the Village Union) presidential candidate defeated the Citizen's League's candidate in the first election ever held here. (At that time, the leader of the Village was called the President rather than the Mayor. This changed in 1920, when the term of office also changed from one year to two years.)

In the election of 1935, the incumbunt Mayor, Edgar P. Foster, decided that he had done his share as Mayor and that he wouldn't run for re-election. Indeed, he had done his share; he served for six terms - 1904 to 1907 as President of the Village and 1929 to 1935 as Mayor of the Village. After seeing Amityville through the difficult, early years of the Great Depression, he turned over his place as the Union Party candidate to Mr. Duryea.

VILLAGE OF AMITYVILLE, N.Y.

BUDGET - 1930-1931.

GENERAL FUND		
POLICE		
Salaries (11 men)	$20,280	
Maintenance	1,500	
Equipment	1,500	
Uniforms 1000		
Car 400		
Miscel. 100		
Traffic Marking	500	
Miscel.	500	24,280
ADMINISTRATION		
Salaries, Board	1,800	
Clerk	3,200	
Treasurer	600	
St. Comm'r	700	
Counsel's services	200	
Engineer's services	500	
Publicity Fund	200	
Election Expenses	160	
Insurance	3,250	
Printing & Stat'y	400	
Interest on notes	350	
Miscel.	500	11,860
MUNICIPAL BUILDING MAINTENANCE		
Janitor service	1,825	
Phone	850	
Light	450	
Heat	550	
Repairs	250	
Miscel.	100	4,025
PUBLIC LIBRARY		3,000
VILLAGE DUMP		1,160
TRAFFIC SIGNALS		
Maintenance	1,100	
New	400	1,500
Total GEN'L FUND		45,825
FIRE DEPARTMENT FUND		5,000
HEALTH DEPARTMENT FUND		
Health Officer	750	
Registrar	125	
Miscel.	125	1,000
STREET FUND		
Payroll	5,550	
Str. upkeep 3750		
Cleaning 1800		
Material	8,700	
Oil & sand 6050		
Cinders, stone, etc 2650		
Maintenance	750	
Tools 250		
Upkeep of Equipment 500		
Freight	100	
Hiring Outside Labor and Equipment	3,000	
New Equipment	900	
Miscel.	500	19,500
Forward		71,325

Forward		$71,325
SIDEWALK FUND		1,500
BOND AND INTEREST FUND		
Bond Retirement	21,500	
Interest	11,008	32,508
LIGHTING FUND		16,000
WATER FUND		
Budget for 1930	5,900	
Unpaid of 1929	2,573	8,473
GRAND TOTAL		129,806
ESTIMATED INCOME		
Income tax	5,700	
Mortgage tax	800	
Franchise tax	400	
Bank tax	200	
Interest	275	
Rent	700	
Permits	300	
Fines	1,000	
Miscel.	125	9,500
NET TOTAL		120,306
BALANCE ON HAND MARCH 1st.		888
TO BE RAISED BY TAX		119,418
VALUATION		$6,163,300
Rate per $100		$1.94

FILED. April 14 1930

Louis W. Ferris
Village Clerk.

ADOPTED by resolution of the Board of Trustees, met in regular April 28 meeting on ...1930.

Louis W. Ferris
Village Clerk

Duryea's competition did not materialize until early March of 1935, less than a month from the election, when the People's Party was formed. George A. Brown was their candidate for Mayor of Amityville. Although the People's Party was newly formed, the election was a close race with only 48 votes separating the winner from the loser.

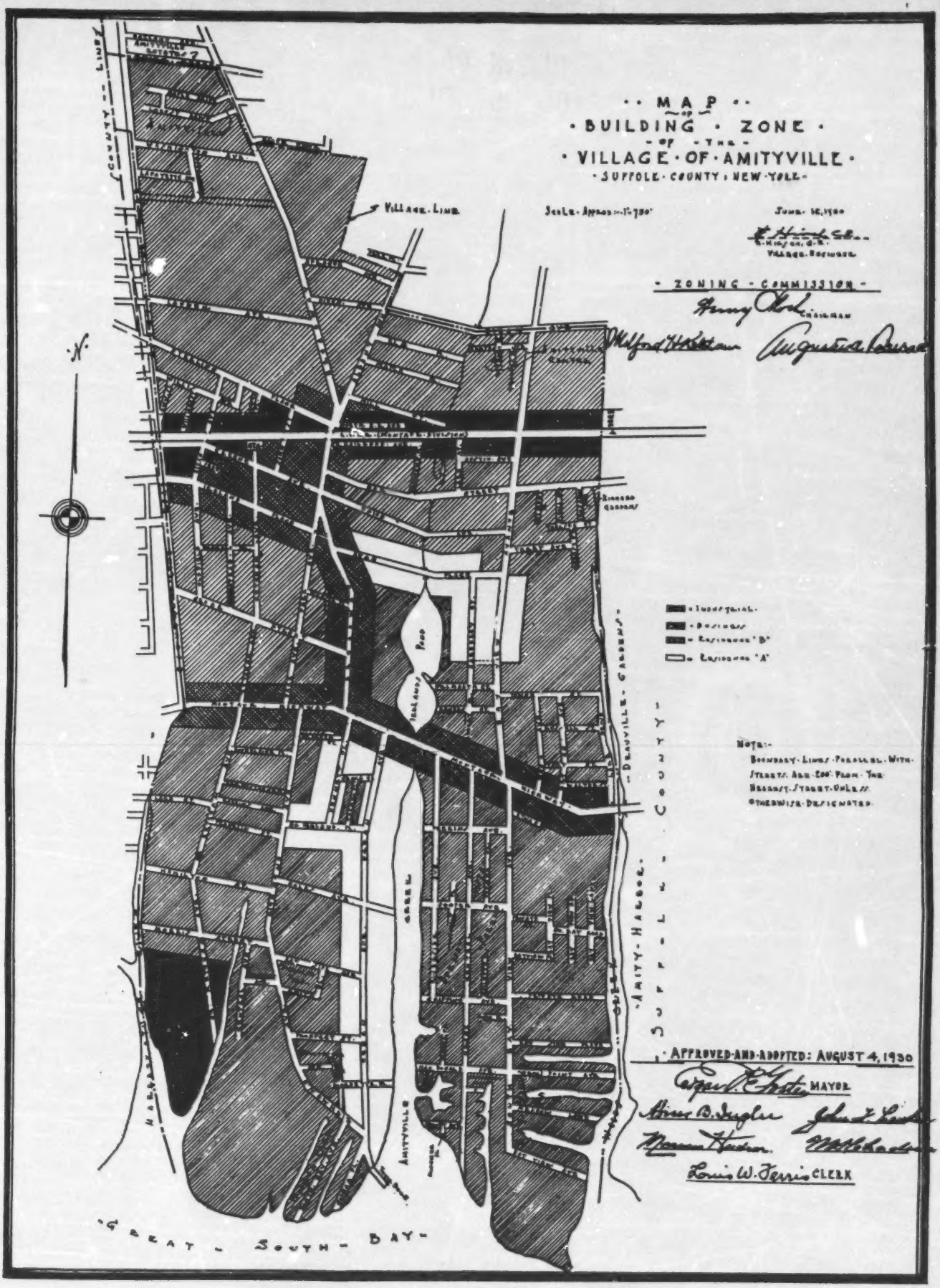
The Union Party platform advocated honest government, a fair deal for all in Village affairs, low taxes, and few expenditures.

The People's Party advocated an up-to-date Fire Department, placing policemen on a civil service basis to keep them out of politics, low taxes, and street improvements.

Duryea won the election for the Union Party after a record registration of 3,613 people, 1,852 of whom actually voted. Through the election, the people had re-affirmed their desire to keep spending down by electing the candidate who advocated low taxes AND few expenditures. Brown had advocated low taxes but more spending - the ingredients of an economic crisis.

(Although Brown lost, two People's Party members, William Moran and William Marsland, were elected to the Board as Trustees. Despite their relative success, the People's Party disappeared after the election of 1935. The Party reappeared in the 1950's, however. A Party member, Herbert Carpenter, won the mayorial campaign in an upset over the Union Party candidate, and remained in office for a few terms, after which the Union Party regained power and the People's Party disappeared.)

It is quite apparent that the political body of Amityville did indeed survive the Great Depression. Although it was confronted with complex problems such as a scarcity of money versus a desire for progress, the Village Board was victorious. The tactics taken to remain abreast of the difficult times and situations are commendable. Carefully developing committees to deal with each separate dilemma appears to have been quite beneficial to the entire Village of Amityville. It can therefore be concluded that the politics of Amityville during the Great Depression was affected in a negative sense, but was dealt with positively.


MAP
BUILDING ZONE
OF THE
VILLAGE OF AMITYVILLE
SUFFOLK COUNTY, NEW YORK
Village Line
Scale Approx. 1" = 750'
June 16, 1930
Village Engineer
ZONING COMMISSION
Chairman
Industrial
Business
Residence "B"
Residence "A"
Note:-
Boundary Lines Parallel With
Streets Are 200' From The
Nearest Street Unless
Otherwise Designated
Pond
Amity Harbor
Creek
Amityville
Great South Bay
APPROVED AND ADOPTED: AUGUST 4, 1930
MAYOR
Louis W. Ferris CLERK